

PALMER HANDBOOK
OF
SCENARIO CONSTRUCTION

VOL. 1



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PALMER PLAN HANDBOOK

VOLUME ONE

AN ELEMENTARY TREATISE
ON THE
THEORY AND PRACTICE
— OF —

PHOTOPLAY SCENARIO WRITING

ACCORDING TO PRESENT DAY
STANDARDS AS RECOGNIZED AND
EMPLOYED BY SUCCESSFUL PHOTO-
DRAMATISTS.

THIS VOLUME IS INCOMPLETE IN IT-
SELF, BEING BUT A SINGLE UNIT IN
THE PALMER COURSE AND SERVICE,
AND SHOULD BE STUDIED CORREL-
ATIVELY WITH VOLUME TWO, THE
MANUSCRIPTS OF "HAIL THE WO-
MAN," "DOUBLE SPEED," AND "THE
MAN UNDER COVER," TOGETHER
WITH THE VARIOUS OTHER PARTS
OF THE PALMER PLAN.

By FREDERICK PALMER

SECOND REVISED EDITION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	9
Child of science and art; growth through study; modern educational methods; technique indispensable; an art apart; experience, not theory; this study an interpretation of life.	
THE SOUL OF ACHIEVEMENT.....	15
STUDY	16
CHAPTER I.....	17
DRAMA.	
Power of observation; drama and action; smiles and tears; difference between drama and narrative; no drama without conflict; value of analysis.	
CHAPTER II.....	25
VISUALIZATION.	
Developing creative power; thinking in pictures; adding characters; more elaborate attempts; studying faces and clothes; observation and imagination; visualization in play building; a practice test; "eyes" and "no eyes."	
CHAPTER III	31
CHARACTERIZATION.	
Characterization and plot; historic characters; false characterizations; fundamental emotions and impulses; inheritance and environment; environment most important; characters must be human; character types.	
CHAPTER IV	39
MATERIAL.	
Dramatic appeal; the love element; comedy possibilities; newspaper material; glorifying the commonplace; hidden beauty.	

	Page
CHAPTER V	45
THEME.	
Theme, simple or big; theme of motherhood; a vital example; theme of courage; memorable big themes; regeneration; the search for beauty.	
CHAPTER VI	51
PLOT.	
Plot mechanism; unities insure coherency; explanation of unity; unity of purpose; incident and situation; the premise situation; incidental revelation of character; influence of small happenings; definite application of incident; growth of situations from incidents.	
CHAPTER VII.....	59
PLOT (Continued).	
The necessity of crisis; movement toward a crisis; averting the climax; useful screen study; approaching dramatic insight; weak climax may ruin photoplay; the play's end; beginning—middle—end.	
CHAPTER VIII	65
COMEDY IN LIFE AND IN DRAMA.	
Tensely human comedy; definitions of humor; great characters have sense of humor; incongruity and truth; comedy of the heart.	
CHAPTER IX	71
HEROIC VALUES.	
Heroic appeal the soul of drama; heroism everywhere; kinds and shades of courage; analysis of courage; "The Man From Lost River"; skillful balance of sympathy; studying heroic psychology; truth and purity; menace of unpunished vice; undesirable artificiality.	
CHAPTER X	79
SHAPING THE PLAY.	
Slow formation of play structure; sound advice; applying technique; avoiding too many characters; cast and locale; adding groups and minor characters; consideration of economy; limiting interior "sets"; putting visualization into practice; preliminary research; importance of details; starting plot development; drama and picture values.	

	Page
CHAPTER XI	89
DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTERIZATION.	
Getting acquainted with characters; after first analysis, play building starts; gradual character development; analysis rather than domination; from motive to effect; contrast breeds human drama; value of incidents; several contrasts.	
CHAPTER XII	97
MOTIVE.	
Cause and effect; definite examples of motive; analyzing motive; characteristics revealed by actions; influence of one scene; importance of originality; a master craftsman's advice.	
CHAPTER XIII	103
PLOT DEVELOPMENT.	
The "old clothes men"; the beginning; avoiding the prologue; unity of time; retroactions; clearness of understanding; preparation; "The Cup of Life"; "Tol'able David"; arousing expectancy; coincidence to be shunned; mystery subjects difficult; atmosphere; finish and reality; correlating the plot movement.	
CHAPTER XIV	111
PLOT DEVELOPMENT.	
Contrast of locales; picture values; day and night scenes; contrast of the serious and comic; parallel action; "effects" in pictures; movement; ensembles; time and experience; climax and ending; disappointing results; importance of ending.	
SPARE TIME STUDY.....	121
SYMPATHY, IMAGINATION, KNOWLEDGE.....	122
CONCLUSION	123



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INTRODUCTION

"The Great Train Robbery," produced in 1897, was the first attempt at photodrama. Many of our students will remember it. So, this new art is several hundred years younger than the stage drama. It has had to pass through various stages of experimental effort to find its strength; it has made its mistakes and suffered its hurts. But today it is firmly started on the path of life it is to travel.

It has all of the fascinating charm of youth. It belongs to the new order. It thrills with the latest creative impulses. It is *democracy*. It speaks the universal language and belongs to all classes, all races and all nations. Someone has said that the last century discovered electricity, and that this century would discover life.

CHILD OF SCIENCE AND ART

The photodrama—the miraculous fruit of the marriage of science and art—is the means through which this prophecy will be realized. It is Nature's—Life's—own interpretation of herself. It has already destroyed the physical barriers of time and space, and before its enlightening assault the spiritual walls of ignorance and prejudice are crumbling. Slowly, but surely, its silent message is welding into one common brotherhood all the races of men.

It is a privilege to be associated with this wonderful art. We want to impress our students with this fact. We want them to feel a dignity in such association. We want them first to have unbounded respect for the work they are undertaking. We want them to gain an understanding of its scope. Millions of people go each day to the many thousands of picture theatres, not alone in this, but in all the countries of the globe. No photodrama is made for any limited group or section. It is sent to every part of the world. If you write a successful scenario, you can visualize the many different audiences who are watching it

move across the screen—in England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South America, Africa—everywhere—peoples black, white and yellow, in rich city theatres, in congested slum districts and in small, far-away places. These multitudes are watching your dream-child, thinking your thoughts and feeling the emotion out of which your scenario was born. Should not such realization stir in you a feeling of exaltation? Should it not broaden your horizon and bring a sense of closer contact with the minds and hearts of all of your fellowmen? Should it not thrill you with the scope of your growth?

GROWTH THROUGH STUDY

All this suggests another thing which we wish to impress. The study of this art *means* growth, just as does any educational pursuit. One may or may not write a successful scenario. We do not guarantee that he will. We can only show the *way*, and do all in our power to inspire and help. But should one fail to gain a commercial return for his work, he still can feel a reward in the realization of his own growth in understanding. He has known the satisfaction of effort and creation. A study of literature does not always make a successful writer. Nor does the study of music or of painting always make a commercially successful musician or artist. But such study does enrich the student, for it helps him to get more value out of *Life*.

So it is with the study of the photodrama. There is no limit to the possibility of one's development in this line of education for it is the study and interpretation of Life itself. One may read all the books there are. One may listen to all the great music that has been composed, or see all the great pictures that have been painted. But one can never read the whole book of Life, or hear all of Life's music, or see all of Life's pictures. From youth to old age one is continually turning a new leaf on which he finds an experience of new interest; continually catching a new note of harmony or opening a new vein of beauty. The study of Life is the most fascinating of all studies. And this new art, which is Life's impression, opens a new world to its students.

MODERN EDUCATIONAL METHODS

The creation of the photodrama is a part of the new educational system. It trains expression. It develops the student's

imagination and all of his powers of thought and feeling. By the new method of teaching music, the student is first taught to *feel*, then to create—to *make* a thing of art by his own individual ability. The old system made him first study the creations of others and discouraged his own expression. But we have learned that it is really through *doing the thing ourselves* that we learn and grow. More than any other educational force has the screen art aroused the Creative Impulse in the masses.

The motion picture itself is an expression of that force which is back of the tremendous change going on in life; it is part of the new education that teaches by helping a man to develop and to express that which is within him. It is a visualization of the tremendous desire for self-expression that beats in the pulse of the world today.

The writing of the photodrama is a work which offers big opportunities to the ones who with patient persistence follow it to success. The demand for this product is far, far greater than the supply. Indeed, the demand has become such as to create something of a panic. Producers are facing the big problem of an alarmingly insufficient supply of photoplay material. A startling number of photodramas each year are necessary to supply the market. The circulation of a published novel covers years. A successful stage production may run two or three seasons in a metropolitan theatre, after which it will be played for years perhaps on the "road" and in stock companies. But the photodrama has a much shorter existence; even those big special features which have "runs" are comparatively short lived.

When a picture is first produced a large number of prints are made from the original negative. These copies are shown simultaneously in the many "first run" city theatres throughout the country. Then they go to the smaller theatres. After a few weeks of second, third and fourth run displays they are shelved. Occasionally one of special merit is reproduced—for example, "The Birth of a Nation."

TECHNIQUE INDISPENSABLE

During this formative period of the screen art, methods have changed so rapidly that these early successes now seem old-fashioned. With the present understanding of a more

definite technique of the photodrama, works of a more enduring worth will be produced. But writers must first be trained in this new technique. Only about one per cent. of all the material coming into the studios can possibly be used. Picture-making firms are searching everywhere for material to keep their cameras clicking. Many scenario contests have been inaugurated. The studios of this big industry—grown to be the fourth largest in the United States—are in the predicament in which the cotton mills would find themselves if the cotton crop failed and they were left without raw material for their machinery.

In the early days anything that was a moving picture pleased the public. It was a new toy. But that time has long gone by. Audiences are becoming more and more critical. The moving-picture has grown out of its toy stage and has taken on the dignity of an art. More is expected and more is demanded of it.

AN ART APART

The producers have bought published novels, magazine stories, and stage plays, for screen adaptation. Some have proven successes. Many have not. Millions have been wasted in the effort to fit this material to the screen. *So the day of the screen writer is here.* In an interview Mr. Frank E. Woods, Supervising Director of the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, said:

“Writing photoplays is emphatically an art apart. It is just as distinct as the art of the stage dramatist is from that of the novelist and short story author. In fact, the relationship of the novel and the spoken play is closer than that of the book and the screen drama. This is true for the reason that dialogue is as essential in the stage play as a plot. Whereas, action and expression are the outstanding characteristics of the screen play.”

This, coming from the supervising director of a corporation that has largely produced stories adapted from published novels and stage plays, indicates that the future of the industry is dependent upon those who learn to write for the screen.

EXPERIENCE, NOT THEORY

The Palmer Photoplay Corporation stands alone in its effort to teach the writing of photodrama. No other institution can claim its same understanding or its same ability. Its organization has not been built upon theory, but upon experience.

Eighty per cent. of all photodramas produced are made in the Los Angeles studios. The Palmer institution was organized in Los Angeles, and for years has been a part of the studio life. It has pulsed with all of the picture-making struggle. It has been a participant in the heartaches and joys, in all the failures and successes. It learned to creep with this young art, then to walk, and through all of this variety of experience it has held steadily to an educational vision. It has believed and taught that the trained writer of photodramas was of first importance to the ultimate success of this new screen art. It has followed its work with a determined purpose, and has established itself as an institution of integrity. It has unbounded faith in the constructive, creative impulse. The crudest manuscripts received through its mails command its respect, for it knows that the untrained writers of these manuscripts have tried to give expression to the creative instinct that links mankind with the Creator.

THIS STUDY AN INTERPRETATION OF LIFE

To every student taking up its course of study, the Palmer Photoplay Corporation wants to communicate this spirit—this faith in his own creative power and respect for the work he is trying to do and an understanding that this work is the study and interpretation of Life. No other study can be of greater importance. No other study can mean more of individual growth to the student, if he pursues it with both his head and his heart. Remember that the Palmer organization stands ready always to encourage and help. It is both teacher and friend. With this handclasp of fellowship, we send you on to the first chapter of our textbook, hoping that *you* may prove to be the great Life interpreter, possibly the writer of the great photodrama for which the world waits.

THE SOUL OF ACHIEVEMENT

"I wonder where he got the idea?"

You have heard this when people thrilled at a great human photoplay. You have heard it as men have stood before a great piece of architecture. You have heard it as women contemplated some universally useful household invention. You have heard it asked after the strategy which won a great battle.

The old saw, "Genius is perspiration," is only half true. Nothing worth while is accomplished without hard, painstaking work, but the psychics have yet to account for that illuminating flash of the mind in which everything worth while, from Edison's incandescent lamp to Kipling's "Recessional," has been conceived. Is it some whisper from the Infinite—or is it the sudden crystallization of earnest desire into the fact of accomplishment? But today we only acclaim What Is; we will let the psychics wonder, Why?

The Soul of Achievement is Inspiration.

Edgar Allen Poe once wrote a mechanically glittering essay in which he proved that there is no such thing as Inspiration; that all that is worth while came into being through orderly, almost mathematical processes of thought. That argument is the only stone in his magnificent, melancholy and purely inspirational tower of achievement which today seems treacherous and crumbling.

The best we can make of Inspiration is the comforting thought that Something—call it God if you will—helps those who help themselves. Not every man can do everything. It would be a lop-sided world if this were so. But to every man is given the power to do something a little better than his fellows—if he will fight disappointment, surmount obstacles, and keep everlastingly at it. The Wonderful Whisper will come to him some day. It *must* come.

Every photoplay that is worth while, in its authorship, its acting or its direction, bears proof that this is true.

—PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE.

STUDY!

Study! Study! Study!

Never cease to study.

One is never too young to learn. One is never too old.

Study prepares the young to meet life.

It enables the old to enjoy it.

Study develops genius. It creates strength. It controls fate. It instills culture. It gratifies ambition. It banishes grief.

It is the foundation of life's greatest happiness.

Don't think of study as work. Think of it as it is—a great pleasure. Don't be afraid of it. Don't believe you can't learn.

That wonderful human intellect is capable of anything. It is yours to develop, improve, enlarge. There is no limit to your possibilities—that is, if you possess energy and determination with desire.

Don't let anything discourage you. What others can do, you can do. The first essential in learning is to believe in yourself. The next is the craving to acquire. The third is to know how. The fourth is *application*. So, is the sixth, the tenth, the one hundredth.

Never allow yourself to say you regret not having studied this or that at school, or that you regret that you don't know this or that. Learn it now!

Don't be afraid you can't learn. Say you will and go ahead.

Each thing you study makes the next thing easier. The first is always the most difficult. You must acquire the habit of study. Then your difficulties are solved. Learn well what you do learn. Make your foundation solid.

CHAPTER I

DRAMA

If one intends writing *photodrama* he must first understand what *drama* is. The lack of this understanding is the reason for most of the failures. Building a photoplay without an understanding of drama is like building an automobile without an engine. The result is a thing dead and useless. *Drama is a living art.*

Many are born with an instinctive dramatic appreciation. This cannot be denied. So also are many born with a natural talent for music. But the musician knows that to be a composer he must first learn the technique of his art—notation, rhythm, harmony. The artist—no matter how great his natural ability—must, before he can paint a picture of worth, study line, perspective, color and composition. The same holds true of a photodramatist. He must learn the technique of his art. But his position is somewhat different from either that of the musician or the artist. Before he learns his art's *technique*, he must know the *soul* of his art. He must learn the conditions of life which make for drama before he can build it into an art form.

POWER OF OBSERVATION

So the student is urged to re-read and study closely this chapter on fundamentals and return to it frequently as he proceeds with his work. He must apply his studies to his observations of life. For, from the beginning, we want to impress on him the great importance of the cultivation of all his powers of observation. Observe! Observe! Study closely your fellow men and women. Learn human nature. Learn what men *do* under the impelling force of their various impulses, passions and desires. Be like the artist who, taking his canvas out of doors, while he paints, studies the thing he is trying to reproduce. But pursue this study in a spirit of kindness and sympathy rather than in a spirit of criticism. Such an attitude will help you to grow, and you will produce greater art. Your

creations will touch the hearts of men. For remember always that whatever of worth you may accomplish will depend upon your own individual growth, as how much that is great in *you* will be the measure of the greatness in your work.

It is not difficult to gain an understanding of what drama really is. An impression prevails that it is something apart from everyday life, something far off and unusual. Many new writers think they must go far afield for situations to put into a play. If you have had this belief you must at once rid yourself of it, if you intend to do any *real* work. You must understand that drama is with you always, in the home, on the street, in business, in the factory, wherever there is human experience. It is a poor corner of life that yields no drama. But it is not to be found for the asking. The student of trained observation must search for it. There is drama wherever there is a soul struggle. At every turn, life thrusts before us the conflicts of duty and desires, of passion and self-restraint. *For drama is conflict—always conflict.*

DRAMA AND ACTION

Those nearest you may be living big drama. They may be struggling against oppressive conditions, or revolting against injustices or misunderstandings or the prejudices, the follies or evil influences of those who surround them. The conflict with whatever limits or belittles one is drama. Whatever he *does* in such struggles is drama put into action. And there is no photo-drama without action.

We do not wish to bewilder the student with too fine an analysis, but he must not confuse action with the word act. Nor must he confuse action with mere movement. The relative values of the things which these two words, action and movement, represent will be discussed in a later chapter. But here we must define the difference between the words act and action.

Most students of drama have been influenced by Aristotle's definition, that drama is imitation. Since Aristotle's day we have learned much about life. We have coined a new word of great significance—*psychology*—which is influencing all of our modern thought and social relationships. Imitation sees only superficial things—a facial expression, a significant turn of the head, a flash of the eye, a twist of the body—the dramatists of

yesterday imitated these and called that imitation drama. But psychology has taught us that drama is something deeper than mere imitation. It is, in fact, the *interpretation* of life, not the imitation of life. To find it, the dramatist must go far below the surface, down into the souls of men. He must study motive, impulse, all the springs of human action. The word "act" belongs to superficial imitation. The superficial is bound also to become artificial. So the word "act" has grown into ill repute. The criticism frequently made of an artificial performer is that he "acts all over the screen." In the taking of a picture one often hears a director, with a touch of sarcasm, impress upon his performers that he does not want the scene he is rehearsing to be "acted." What he really wants is that it shall be *lived*, that it shall truly interpret the emotions which have prompted it. So the screen writer must evolve photodrama which may be lived, not the kind which may be superficially acted.

SMILES AND TEARS

Drama may be either tragedy or comedy. Never make the mistake of thinking that comedy is not drama. You might as well believe that there is no comedy in life. This mistake leads to most of the forced, unnatural, artificial comedy we see on the screen. In some of our moments of intensest tragedy we do the funniest things. That play is greatest in which, as in life, there are both tears and laughter.

Formerly a tragedy was defined as a play which ended in death. Today we have learned that to have to live may be often-times far more tragic than to have to die. A young woman shoots her lover; the act of shooting is not the drama, but the woman's conflict of passionate emotion—jealousy, resentful anger, sense of personal wrong—which impelled the act *is*. The shooting is the action that gives expression to the inner conflict which is the drama. And the drama is now not with the dead man, but with the living woman. Her future fate is bound to be one of struggle, conflict with the law, and with her own soul. Suppose she should love again—perhaps the brother of the man whom she has slain. Then the drama would be intensified because her own soul struggle would be greatly increased.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DRAMA AND NARRATIVE

There is a difference, too, between drama and narrative. To understand this difference is of great importance. To illustrate, let us take a selection from one of Francois Coppée's short stories, "The French Show." Critics consider it a pure bit of narrative.

"The night was clear and glittering with stars. A crowd was gathered in the market-place. They stood in gaping delight about the tent of some strolling acrobats. Red and smoking lanterns lighted the performance that was just beginning. Rolling their muscular limbs in dirty wraps, and decorated from head to foot with tawdry ruffles of fur, the athletes, four boyish ruffians with vulgar heads, were ranged in line before the painted canvas which represented their exploits. They stood with heads down, legs apart, and their muscular arms crossed upon their chests.

"The feminine attraction—a woman with a red rose in her hair and a man's coat over her ballet dancer's dress, to protect her from the night air—was playing, at the same time, with the cymbals and the bass drum, a desperate accompaniment to a polka which was being murdered by a blind clarinet player. The ringmaster, a sort of Hercules with the face of a galley-slave, roared out his furious appeal in loud voice.

"Suddenly the music ceased, and the crowd broke into roars of laughter. The clown had just made his appearance.

"He wore the ordinary costume of his kind—the short vest and many-colored stockings of the Opera Comique, the three horns turned backward, the red wig with its turned-up queue and its butterfly end. He was a young man, but alas, his face, whitened with flour, was already seamed with vice. He planted himself before the audience, and opened his mouth with a silly grin. His bleeding gums were almost devoid of teeth. The ringmaster kicked him violently from behind.

"'Come on!' he ordered.

"Then the traditional dialogue, punctuated by slaps in the face, began between the mountebank and the clown. The audience applauded these souvenirs of the classic farce, the humor of which, coarse but pungent, seemed a drunken echo of the

laughter of Moliere. The clown threw out a low jest, to which his master, simulating a prudish indignation, responded with thumps upon the head. But the adroit clown was unexcelled in the art of receiving affronts. He knew to perfection how to bend his body like a bow under the impulse of a kick. After receiving on one cheek a full-armed blow, he stuffed his tongue and began to whine until a new blow passed the artificial swelling into the other cheek. The flour on his face and the red powder of his wig disappeared under the shower of slaps, enveloping him like a cloud. At last he exhausted all his resources of low scurrility, ridiculous contortions, grotesque grimaces, and pretended aches, and fell at full length to the ground. Whereupon, the ringmaster, judging this gratuitous show long enough and that the public was sufficiently fascinated, sent him off with a final cuff.

“Then the music began with such violence that the painted canvas trembled. The clown, having seized the sticks of a drum on one of the beams of the scaffolding, mingled a triumphant rataplan with the cracked thunder of the cymbals and the distracted wail of the clarinet. The ringmaster, roaring again with his heavy voice, announced that the show was about to begin; and, as a sign of defiance, he threw two or three old fencing gloves among his fellow wrestlers.”

We have quoted this at length, for we shall make further reference to it in future chapters.

NO DRAMA WITHOUT CONFLICT

In this bit of narrative we have picture values, characterizations, movement and even action. But we have no drama. Why? There is no emotional conflict, no under-the-surface struggle. Photoplays of this character, full of bustle and a variety of incident, have been produced. But they were of trivial value. Some of them may have offered a certain momentary entertainment. But they possessed nothing of real power, and were forgotten immediately after the audience had left the theatre. It is the drama, the thing of emotional human struggle, that grips the spectator and remains in his memory. No one having seen it can ever forget that moment in the “Miracle Man,” when the child throws away his crutches and struggles up the path on

his little crippled legs. This is great drama. It is great because it is universal in its appeal. Its action tells of the exultant triumph of faith over weakness. It catches the heart in a quick stricture of sympathetic understanding. It brings tears to all eyes. For who has not felt the great need of faith to overcome some human weakness?

This bit of quoted Coppée narrative has *possibilities* of strong drama. Let us suppose the woman playing the cymbals to be the wife of the ringmaster, and that she and the clown are in love with one another. These lovers both hate and fear the brute of a ringmaster, upon whom they are financially dependent. They are, too, under the domination of his superior physical power. The ringmaster, knowing the situation, takes fiendish delight in torturing the two. During the scene's progress—with the interested audience watching—the ringmaster treats his wife contemptuously. Such an action on his part brings the situation to a crisis. It enrages the clown to the breaking point of endurance. All of his rising passion of hate, heretofore held in restraint by fear, breaks its bounds. He leaps furiously upon the ringmaster, and possibly kills him.

In such action we have drama. For it is the expression in action of tense inner emotional conflict.

Other dramatic situations may be built from the elements of drama in this narrative story. The student is advised and urged to use his imagination and create, among these characters, other relationships which might lead to conflict and dramatic action. How might the woman feel, and what might she do when watching her lover struggle so angrily with her husband? Then there are the four young athletes, and the blind clarinet player. Weave them into your action. What sort of dramatic conflict would they express?

VALUE OF ANALYSIS

It is excellent practice to analyze stories in this fashion. Bronson Howard, the first American dramatist who possessed a real technique (save Bartley Campbell), was once asked how he learned to write drama.

“By analyzing plays,” he replied.

He said that he had, up to that time, analyzed over twelve hundred plays. Go to the theatre and analyze photoplays. Note where they are weak and where strong in drama. Note the reason for such strength or weakness. But in this work of analysis do not let yourself fall into the unconscious error of imitating the stories of other photodramatists. You want to be an interpreter of life, not an imitator of the work of others.

Drama is inner conflict, soul struggle—the thing which put into your play makes it pulse with life. To build a photodrama this inner conflict must be made to express itself in natural visible action by medium of the screen.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What relation do drama and action bear to each other?
2. What is the difference between imitation and interpretation?
3. Is comedy drama?
4. What is the difference between drama and narrative?
5. What are some of the values of observation?
6. Where may drama be found?
7. Upon what will your success as a photodramist depend?
8. Create some dramatic possibility out of the bit of Coppée narrative.

CHAPTER II

VISUALIZATION

We are studying *photodrama*. We must, therefore, learn to put our dramatic action into picture form. This would be easier had we been differently educated. The majority of people go through life and lose most of the things of greatest value it offers because they do not know how to *see* them. Our schools are beginning to give definite training in visualization, trying definitely to develop the inner vision. The men and women who have been so trained will write the photodrama of the future, and they will give to the world great art forms.

DEVELOPING CREATIVE POWER

The Palmer institution endeavors to train its students along the lines of this new method—not to fill them with an accumulation of facts, but to develop in each his own creative power. One accomplishes, not because of what he has been taught, but because of *what he himself can do*.

John Burroughs, in one of his books, advised the cultivation of eyes, many eyes—eyes of the mind, of the heart, and the soul. That is what the photodramatist must do—cultivate eyes. Particularly must he become *eye-minded*. In studying a foreign language one feels that he has acquired fluency of speech when he has learned to think in that language. So one has accomplished something in the writing of photodrama when he has learned to *think in pictures*. For he must remember always that in his art he is appealing to the eye, as the musical composer must remember that he is appealing to the ear. Pictorial appeal is the photodramatist's language, as words are the language of the writer.

THINKING IN PICTURES

In learning how to think in pictures, it is well first to test your powers of observation. Close your eyes and try to recall

a room in your own home, or one with which you are familiar. Imagine that you are standing in the doorway looking into this room. Try to see it in your mind as clearly as though it were actually before you. Mentally examine every picture and ornament. If there be a bookcase, try to read the titles of the books in the order of their arrangement.

After you have made this effort of visualization, go to that room and view it in actuality. Learn how remiss and defective has been your observation. Note what and how many objects you overlooked, and where you were wrong as to the arrangement of the furniture, pictures and ornaments. Repeat this exercise, trying to make a more complete mental picture. Visualize other rooms in this same way. After a third or fourth trial you will notice an improvement in the clarity of your mental vision. When you have arrived at a fair degree of exactitude in recalling the room's inanimate furnishings, then people it. It is well to begin with just one person, *let us say a woman*. She may be seated, sewing. Picture her attitude, her manner of sitting in the chair, the style of dress she is wearing, the way in which her hair is arranged. Picture her face, her type of features, her particular expression. Note her actions, how she threads and uses her needle; how she lifts and inspects the garment on which she is working; how she reaches for her scissors, in a basket on a table beside her. Do not allow your mind to drift—do not indulge in lazy reverie. Remember that in this picture of visualization you are working on an exercise which is a part of your work as a student.

ADDING CHARACTERS

When you have satisfactorily visualized this one character, bring another person into the room. Picture this second individual as you did the first. Make the two perform actions which you mentally command. Then bring in a third, then others.

Or you may visualize a kitchen. Picture all of its details. A serving woman enters through a door which opens into the dining room. You catch a glimpse of this latter room before she closes the door. Visualize the woman. Follow, in a state of clear, distinct imagination, all of her movements. She takes an apron from a hook, and ties its strings about her waist, after

which she takes the tea kettle to the sink, fills it, and puts it back again on the stove. If it is a gas stove, she lights it. She opens a cupboard and brings out some food. Another woman, the mistress of the house, enters. Visualize her. Invent some commonplace occurrence. The serving woman drops a dish and breaks it. The mistress is annoyed and scolds. Follow the natural actions of the two.

So you may visualize other rooms, other places—an office, a store, a bank, the cabin of a steamer. First make your picture of the place very clear before you people it. Gradually add characters to your mental scenes until you find yourself able to visualize a ball-room with a large number of people present. Look into the different faces, one at a time, as though trying to make the acquaintance of each. Then single out of the crowd one particular individual. Now banish all the others from your picture.

MORE ELABORATE ATTEMPTS

Let this one whom you have chosen walk toward you. Bring him within a few feet of you, where he halts. Note the increasing clearness with which you view his expression. Study his face closely. He is deliberating about something, hesitating to carry it into execution. He comes to a sudden decision, and turns to leave the ball-room, as though going in search of someone whom he very much wants to find. From the first, it is best to make your created characters show some motive in their actions. You mentally follow this man through a hall and into several other rooms in succession. As you go, note carefully each one of these rooms and its occupants. Your man finally arrives in a conservatory where he finds the one or ones for whom he has been looking. Make these others whatever your imagination decides. But all of your visualizations must be made distinct, real, and lifelike.

Vary these exercises by practicing them in noisy places, forcibly holding your visualization in spite of the things that might divert you. It is excellent training, too, in concentration. Try it finally in a vacant room, with the eyes wide open gazing at a blank wall. Pretend that this wall is a moving-picture screen and visualize your people on it.

STUDYING FACES AND CLOTHES

Whenever you are in any assemblage of people—in a church, or the theatre, or riding on a railroad train, or in a street car—note the faces upon your memory. Impress on your memory not only the faces, but the appearance of each individual—the sort of clothes he wears, and his manner of wearing them. So much of character is told in one's manner of wearing clothes. Note the individual's gloves and shoes, and his jewelry. Note the way in which the different women arrange their hair. Such practice will not only increase your power of visualization, but it will help in your study of character.

Place these people in some other environment. Picture the different kinds of homes to which they may be going. Picture the ones who will meet them there, and the bits of drama that may be enacted. In such practice you are making your observation and your imagination work together. When you come to the process of creating, out of your imagination, a photodrama, you will use things which your observation has taught you, and which you have learned are true in life.

OBSERVATION AND IMAGINATION

Of course mere observation does not make one a successful photodramatist. It is imagination which transforms this observation into art. It is the creative spirit which lifts one into the highest art world—the world of Beauty. You will learn more about this later.

When you have learned to picture clearly you will be equipped with the foundation for creative work. Let the practice of visualization become a habit. Do not merely dream. Think! Keep alert. Never be aimless. Be definite. Banish all extraneous thoughts or intruding images, maintaining resolute control.

Marguerite Bertsch says, relative to this habit of visualization, "Try to recall, after having listened to some vivid narration, the identical words of the speaker. You will find, then, that you have not been listening to words, but rather that you have been following scenes that were so real as to have blotted out even the consciousness of your immediate surroundings."

You have, in fact, been making mental pictures of the things about which the speaker has been telling. And, although you may not remember his words, you have gained a vivid knowledge of the important things he meant to convey.

VISUALIZATION IN PLAY BUILDING

When you begin the actual work of plot invention and play building, you will realize the great value of this practice of visualization. For most trained writers do not put a word on paper until they have visualized their whole story. Miss Lois Weber, director of many notable successes, said,

“If I cannot visualize my play in its entirety before I start, I do not start, because I know it would be useless to attempt to finish it.”

Such a statement coming from Miss Weber carries weight. Yet it is a statement which every successful producer, director, and photoplay writer will corroborate.

Carry this work of visualization into your reading of literature. Picture the scenes and different characters in the books which you have read. When you have finished some particularly interesting story, take the characters on into other scenes of your imagining. Do the same thing with poems. “Lochinvar’s Ride” may be made into vivid picture drama. So may “Paul Revere’s Ride,” and many other familiar poems.

A PRACTICE TEST

Take the selection from Coppée’s story, used in the preceding chapter, and visualize it. Picture all the details of the tent and the appearance of the performers. Picture the different men, women, and children in the audience—French peasant types—with the light from smoking lanterns flickering over their faces.

When listening to music let yourself paint mental pictures. You may paint the fanciful creations which the music suggests. In doing this you learn to feel as well as to see your pictures. And it is most important that you should learn to feel your pictures. Marion Reedy said that the success of “The Birth of a Nation” was due to the fact that the picture was *felt* by its

creators. Mr. Thomas Dixon felt it to the point of fanaticism. Mr. Griffith felt and lived it for the greater part of a year. And the actors were made to feel it. To write a great photodrama one must himself first be gripped by the picture of life which he is trying to portray. Creative imagination has been defined as "*the thinking of the heart as well as of the head.*"

"EYES" AND "NO-EYES"

Says Professor Scripture, "Eyes and No-Eyes journeyed together. No-Eyes saw only what thrust itself upon him. Eyes was on the watch for everything."

So we urge our students to travel with Eyes. In such association you will find an ever growing picture of life. When you have learned to think in pictures you are on the road to the art of photoplay writing.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by visualization?
2. In what way are the new creative methods of education different from the old methods?
3. Of what importance is visualization to the photodramatist?
4. In what different ways may you develop the power of visualization?
5. Can mere observation make a photodramatist?
6. Why should your observation and imagination work together?
7. Why is it important that you should learn to feel pictures as well as see them?
8. Visualize the detail of the piece of Coppée narrative.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTERIZATION

You have been told what drama is. You understand that to write for the screen you must put your dramatic action into pictures. This brings us to the subject of characterization. To build a drama there must be a group of characters, held together by a series of happenings which lead to a dramatic climax.

Great dramatists and great novelists are remembered by their characterizations. Some of the characters of fiction are as familiar as are the real people of history. And they have exerted great influence on the shaping of our lives. Hamlet, Shylock, King Lear, Lady Macbeth, Portia, Ophelia have all grown to seem real. So have Ibsen's characters. So have Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean and the characters created by Dickens, Thackeray and Hawthorne. So have those of many of our later writers.

But the great *original* screen characterizations have not yet been conceived. They will be some day. For there is nothing that man can think or feel which will not be interpreted on the screen when the writers, the directors and the actors have become great enough artists.

CHARACTERIZATION AND PLOT

One remembers great characterizations with more clearness than the plot through which the writer has moved them, as one remembers the people whom he has met, but must make an effort to recall the circumstances surrounding such meetings. People are of first importance. It is always the individual in whom we are interested. We read of crime. It shocks us. But we are interested in the criminal. Crowds gather around a jail or courthouse to catch a glimpse of such an offender. The newspapers print columns about him—where he was born, what his home life was, what his people were like, what sort of life he led. All of this information is devoured by thousands, curious to learn everything pertaining to this man and what it was that prompted him to commit this crime. Curiosity is intensified if the man happens to be a minister's son. Why? Give your own analysis of this.

Then the lawyers stage the trial. More characters are brought in—the offender's mother, father, wife, son or daughter—the ones who will strengthen the drama's heart interest. The newspapers publish more columns about these other characters—what they wear, how they act, what they say, how they look, if they weep, if they faint, and how, in parting, they cling to the offender, if he has been found guilty.

Those who do feats of valor stir in us keen interest. We are interested in the thing worth while accomplished; in the action performed, but we are more interested in the performer. We stand in crowds to see him pass in the street, or to hear him speak from some platform. So it is always the man or the woman—the *character*—who commands our tensest interest.

HISTORIC CHARACTERS

It was because of this understanding of character value that Froude wrote his "Beacon Lights of History," in which he grouped the events of certain epochs of history around certain dominant personalities. We are interested in Roman history because of Caesar, Brutus and those others who made Rome great. We are interested in Waterloo because of Napoleon and Wellington. We remember these personalities when we have forgotten what they did. Washington was the beacon light of our American revolution. And the great drama of our Civil war has been written by an Englishman—John Drinkwater—around its beacon light, Abraham Lincoln. Some day an even greater screen drama will be written around this character, so big in his simplicity that he belongs not alone to America, but to the whole world.

We are not stressing this importance of characterization with any intent to depreciate the values of plot and situation. Indeed, they cannot really be separated from the characters who inspire them. But, in so many picture plays, plot and situation have been emphasized at the expense of characterization. The characters have been distorted and made absolutely untrue to life for the purpose of exploiting some situation which was thought to be "a thriller," to have "punch." Such false situations always fail in their expected power to thrill.

FALSE CHARACTERIZATION

Again the student is urged to substantiate this statement by his own experience. Watch the screen and note what badly drawn characters may do to a play. Whenever a character makes an untrue move—untrue to *itself* as a characterization—you will shrink with somewhat the same feeling experienced when a false note is struck in a musical performance. If the characters continue to be sacrificed to the situation you may stay to the end of the film, but you will be bored. When you leave the theatre you will talk with your companion on some other topic than that of the photoplay you have just witnessed. It has not stirred in you enough interest to hold your thoughts; already you have forgotten it.

False characterization can never carry any situation to a satisfactory conclusion. The real thrill, the “punch” grows only out of the *true*. When out of the conflict of real characters grows a situation of gripping truth, the spectator does not come out of the theatre talking about something else. He has been caught in the grip of an emotion too great to allow him to forget what he has seen. He tells of it eagerly to others, and urges them to see this particular production. That is why the really true things live. For no matter how much a production may be exploited by attractive publicity, unless it portrays some human experience with *truth*, it is bound to die a natural death.

DRAMA OF CHARACTER

Of course, plays that are weak in drama and characterization have been given entertainment value—been “put over”—by good photography, clever art-titles, and picturesque ensembles—well dressed ball room crowds, gay cabaret parties, big barroom gatherings, or bodies of men on horseback. But this is *spectacle*, not *drama*. It has values which our students will be taught. But you are first being taught to write drama, the thing most vital to the future life of the picture art. And strong consistent characterizations are drama’s life.

What is character? Briefly, it is the individual’s physical, mental and spiritual expression of himself. In common parlance we speak of our character as ourselves. We talk of being ashamed of ourselves, of expressing ourselves, of educating our-

selves. This self has been formed out of a complexity of influences and causes—of heredity, environment, education, and one's own particular habits of thought, feeling and action. It is the sum of the individual's racial life added to the forces without and within himself which are shaping his present life and carrying him on to the future.

All of which brings us again in touch with the word psychology, that science of the evolution of man's self-hood. Forces of which he is both conscious and unconscious are taking part in this evolution. In a textbook of this kind we must confine ourselves largely to the study of the forces of heredity and environment.

A man inherits not only from his immediate ancestors, but also from the race. He inherits from men and women who died thousands of years before he was born. He inherits from ancestors who lived under kings and feudal lords, and from those who lived in tribes. He inherits from savage ancestors. So the ancestral struggle—the ancestral drama—is continually going on within each of us. We are always in conflict with some selfish or bestial trait of character.

FUNDAMENTAL EMOTIONS AND IMPULSES

Because of these racial inheritances men of every nationality have the same selfish and unselfish instincts; the same passions of love, hate and fear. Man has, too, the same fundamental ideals of courage, justice, loyalty, etc. When we say of a photodrama that it makes an universal appeal, it is because its dominant interest is impelled by these universal inheritances.

It is because of environment that characters differ. Heredity is very old. But one's environment begins at birth.

What is environment? The home, the town or country into which one is born? Yes, it is these and more. It is everything which shapes a man's individual life for good or ill. It is his family, his relatives and friends, the women he loves, the one he marries and his children. It is his education, his work, his play, his religion, his politics. It is the food he eats and the air he breathes. It is the beauty or ugliness of his surroundings. It is his wealth or poverty. It is the prejudices or conventions

of his social state. It is the newspapers he reads and the famous men and women about whom he hears. There is no limit to environment.

INHERITANCE AND ENVIRONMENT

Their racial inheritances—their instincts, passions and fundamental ideals—make men understand each other. Their environment brings differences of opinion, brings fears and misunderstanding. It is environment which makes the Englishman different from the Japanese, the German from the Italian, the Swede from the Russian. Environment creates a difference in the men and women of the same nation. The Scotchman, Welshman and Irishman are different from the Englishman. In America there is a marked difference of characteristics in the people of New England, of the South and of the West.

That factor in environment which is work or business, makes a difference between those who work with their hands and those who work with their brains. It creates differences among the various classes of business and professional men—the merchant and lawyer, the banker and the college professor. It makes the laboring men of different trades different. Watch a Labor Day parade, note how the work a man is engaged in will leave its mark on him. The teamsters, truckmen and muscular out-of-doors worker; the round-shouldered, sunken-chested garment-makers; the clerks and bookkeepers and the carpenters, masons and painters; the bakers and weavers and machinists, all bear the marks of their occupation.

The work of the school teacher, the newspaper reporter and the factory employe makes a difference in the woman. That factor in environment which is play and social custom makes a difference in the society butterfly and the home-making type of woman.

We might go on endlessly. But we have given illustrations enough to help the student continue his own character study. In such study you must take into consideration both heredity and environment. They have largely made your characters what they are. We say "largely," for there is another, a spiritual force—"that something"—in a man, which, if he use it, will help him to free himself from the limiting influences of all these other forces.

ENVIRONMENT MOST IMPORTANT

When we speak of heredity we mean *racial inheritance*—the slow welding processes of the ages—rather than what one immediately inherits from his father and mother. This latter is very slight. So slight, in fact, as to be almost negligible. A child develops its parents' traits because it is imitative, not because it inherited those traits. In the last analysis it is environment that carries the burden of shaping character.

A man, therefore, being the result of racial inheritance and environment is both good and bad. If you make him all good, or all bad, you have not made him true to life. The best men have their evil impulses, and the worst have their good ones. The hero who is all heroic is absurd; so is the thoroughly villainous villain. Sometimes the man who has led an evil life will perform an act of great generosity, sacrifice or courage. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote:

"The habitual liar may be a very honest fellow, and live truly with his wife and friends. Another man who never told a formal falsehood in his life may yet be himself one lie—heart and face from top to bottom."

CHARACTERS MUST BE HUMAN

We want our students to get away from the conventional all-good heroes and all-bad villains. Make your characters *human*. This has been the charm of the Charles Ray characterizations. They have their moments of human weakness as well as their moments of strength. And this contrast, as our students will learn, serves to intensify greatly their dramatic appeal.

We must emphasize this point. So many stories come to us written around the good hero and the bad villain. We know stories with such characterizations are hopeless. Your dramatic foundation has crumbled before you have begun to build your plot. Remember that your characters build their own plot. The plot and the characters exist for each other.

Of course, while all men are both good and bad, there are those who are cast in bigger molds, who dominate because of greater force of character. There are the ones, too, of finer sensibilities who possess more of ideality. For drama—for conflict—these finer characters are brought into contact and contrast with those of coarser grain.

CHARACTER TYPES

There are, too, types of strong individuality and what is known as "character" types. The individual has original characteristics. The type conforms to convention. The individual may be either of fine or coarse fibre. He may be upright or unscrupulous. But he is always distinctive and offers much of dramatic possibility. Most leaders are individuals. But all individuals are not leaders. Disraeli—played on the screen by George Arliss—is an individual and a leader. Noah Vale, in "A Poor Relation"—played on the screen by Will Rogers—is an individual but not a leader.

Some of the individual characterizations done on the screen are: Charles Ray's "Coward," Hobart Bosworth's "Sea Wolf," Pauline Frederick's "Madame X," Mary Pickford's "Stella Maris," John Barrymore's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," Gareth Hughes' "Sentimental Tommy," Charles Chaplin in "The Kid" and Lon Chaney in "The Penalty." Lillian Gish in "Way Down East," lifts the character of Anna Moore out of the "type" class and makes her an individual.

In pursuing his character study the student must picture the character's environment and note its shaping influence. Study in this way the characters in the bit of Coppée narrative. Try to develop the clown, the woman or the clarinet player into a character that shall be individual, with some distinctive features, different from his or her type.

Characters, to have any value, must be human beings of flesh and blood, not mere manikins dressed in clothes.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What have characterizations to do with drama?
2. Why are you interested in people?
3. What happens to a photodrama when the characters are weak?
4. What value has truth in relation to characterization?
5. What is character, and of what is it the result?
6. What racial characteristics have mankind in common?
7. What is environment, and how does it influence character?
8. What is the difference between a type and an individual?

CHAPTER IV

MATERIAL

We have said that dramatic material is found wherever there is human experience. We have impressed the necessity of cultivating your powers of observation. Remember that your characters build their own plots. In the study of drama you must go back of the action and learn the emotional cause which prompts it. Now we have come to another phase of our study—the sort of material to select for use. Of what human experiences shall it be made?

It must be that which furnishes the most dramatic appeal and affords pictorial opportunity. *It must have interest and entertainment as well as truth.* Then it must be given some degree of new treatment; and, because he is interpreting life through an art, the writer must illuminate his work with something of ideality, of beauty.

DRAMATIC APPEAL

Let us first consider dramatic appeal. What is it? It is that peculiar quality in a photodrama which stirs *feeling*—the feeling which makes the spectator catch his breath and exclaim, “How true!” Such an exclamation means that he has seen something of universal appeal depicted in the writer’s characterizations. It is a test of worth.

But to arouse such feeling, the writer himself must have first experienced it. He must be able not alone to affect the ones who view his play, but to affect them as he wishes. And it is a difficult thing to get into your work the thing which you yourself most feel. You may think that you have done so. *But you may be using up all this feeling in your own being, and leaving your work passive and uninspired.* You are surprised and hurt when others find it so—after all the stirring emotion you have felt while writing it. It is best, therefore, to put it

aside for awhile. Read it again after a few days and you will be able to see its weakness. This is the method pursued by writers of experience.

Dramatic appeal is influenced by plot development.

THE LOVE ELEMENT

Dramatic material to have interest must offer story and plot value. First of all it must embrace a love story. It must make an emotional appeal. Love is the impelling force back of all creative effort. It has been the inspiration back of the whole Drama of Life. It is the force which has been back of all civilization, of the humanizing of mankind. It has been the force working through all of our social fabric, bringing mankind closer together, first in the family, then in the tribe, then in the nation. Out of love have grown all of our words of social relationship—father, mother, brother, sister, sweetheart, wife, son, daughter and friend. These words all stand for some share of love's expression. The great demand of the human heart is for love.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote:

"The body is a house of many windows; there we sit showing ourselves and crying out to the passerby to come and love us."

Because of this demand of the human heart we are always living over, in books, dramas, pictures, and even in newspapers, the love affairs of others. So the love story is the very life of your photoplay, its breath, its power of existence. The love of a man for a woman makes a never failing appeal. But this is not the only love. The love of a mother or a father for a son or a daughter makes strong dramatic material. This has been shown in the big success of "Over the Hill" and "The Old Nest." Then there is the big sacrificial love of a strong friendship and the charm of the love that exists between a child and an older person—as in "The Kid."

COMEDY POSSIBILITIES

To have entertainment value, dramatic material must offer some possibilities for comedy.

Dramatic material must be true to life but not commonplace. That is, it must not be dull realism. It must have some touch of idealism. One may paint a mudpuddle perfectly. But if it is only a mudpuddle, who cares to see it? If he paints a beautiful sunrise or sunset above his mudpuddle, or an artistic group of trees nearby, then he has put something of beauty into his picture. Mr. Griffith did this in "Broken Blossoms." The girl's life with her brutal foster father is harsh, repellent realism. But it is relieved by the charm and ideality of the Chinese boy's love for her.

In "Miss Lulu Bett" the characters surrounding Lulu are sordid and commonplace. But Miss Gale, the author, illumines her story by putting much simple, unconscious beauty into Lulu's character.

Dramatic material must be true to life; it must reveal some new beauty in human nature. But do not, under any circumstance, try to put this beauty into your work by preaching. Nothing can be more fatal to your photodrama. Preaching kills your work as art. You must let your characters unconsciously live this suggestion of ideality. *Never make the mistake of preaching.*

You must give your material some degree of new treatment. To illustrate: It has been stated that there were thirty-six possible dramatic situations. This is apparently true. A piano has only a limited number of keys. Yet different composers have used these same keys for the interpretation of a limitless variety of musical compositions. And each composer puts into his work some new strain of harmony. So the photodramatist must give his material some new treatment.

NEWSPAPER MATERIAL

A lecturer at the University of California made the statement that each daily issue of a large city newspaper is worth about twenty thousand dollars to the writer of fiction. John Northern Hilliard, the novelist, in commenting on this statement said:

"The lecturer did not mean to imply, of course, that any one could sit down and skim twenty thousand dollars of copy off his favorite newspaper. What he really meant was that a

writer, a master of his craft who had a market for his wares, could go to the daily newspaper for his facts and get enough material to turn into stories, photoplays, novels, novelettes and magazine articles that would bring him in twenty thousand dollars. In other words, gold is where you find it, in literature as in mining."

Yes, one can get the gold ore. But it is the artist's particular ability which turns this raw material into coins or pieces of beautiful jewelry.

Mr. Hilliard analyzed the news items in a single copy of a San Francisco newspaper. The first line he mentioned read: "Treasure Robbery on Pacific Liner." It does suggest romance. So much does it suggest it that this idea has been used many, many times in photoplays. All sorts of railroad "hold-ups" and robberies have been used. Much of it has been only sensational claptrap. Yet some writer might take this hackneyed material, and by giving it new and dignified treatment evolve a photodrama of artistic worth.

GLORIFYING THE COMMONPLACE

Gilbert K. Chesterton once made a wager that he could write an essay around the topic of a lamp post and make it literature. He did. But he brought to the effort the keen insight, the broad understanding of life and the fine appreciation of an artist.

So hackneyed material may be made into strong photodrama. But the ability to do this depends upon your powers as a writer—upon how much of *you* there is to put into your work.

In this great country with its vast mixture of races, all thrown into the melting pot of American tradition, there is a wonderful amount of raw material for drama. But you must transform this material—with characters and scenes—into an illusion so real that it will stir in others the emotions latent in life itself. And you must animate this reality also with something of beauty which shall justify your photodrama's existence.

HIDDEN BEAUTY

This beauty may sometimes be hidden under an ugly exterior. It may be a bit of ideality buried under grosser charac-

teristics. Take for instance, the clown in the bit of Coppée narrative. Put into the coarseness of his character some touch of ideality. Do the same with the woman and the blind clarinet player. You can even do it with the brute of a ringmaster. *But be most careful not to make this ideality mawkish.* In doing that you make your character untrue, artificial and detestable. To have value this finer inspiration must be given unconscious expression.

Mr. Donn Byrne, in his charming little book, says of certain fiction characters in "Messer Marco Polo":

"If they weren't real and live and warm, what would a story be but a jumble of dead words. A house with nobody in it, the poorest thing in the world. . . . A story is how destiny has interwoven the fine and gallant and the tragic points of life. And you mustn't look at them with the eye of the body, but you must feel with the antennae of your being."

Let the student ask himself if he has put into his dramatic material any suggestion of this finer thing which he must feel with the antennae of his being.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is good material for the photodrama and what must it furnish?
2. What is dramatic appeal?
3. Why is love interest of such importance?
4. What are entertainment values?
5. What may the ideal do to commonplace realism?
6. Why should you avoid preaching in your photodrama?
7. What is meant by new treatment?

CHAPTER V

THEME

The necessity for a better understanding of theme is continually being emphasized in the writing of photodrama. One often gropes in the dark for a thing he most needs. He knows it is there, but he has not enough light to help him find it. This has been true of theme.

What is theme? It is the photoplay's purpose, its incentive. If the play has no purpose it has no theme. And a purposeless thing stands small chance of achieving anything of particular worth. A purposeless individual, with no incentive, no aim in life, is not apt to accomplish much. He is blown about by every little breeze of suggestion, and drifts aimlessly. It is said of him that he has no character. So a photoplay may have no character: it may drift aimlessly here and there, catch at some bits of pretty photography, waste feet of film in trivialities, in inane misunderstandings which may and usually do, develop into a fist fight. Then it may stop to watch the antics of a dog, a cat, a monkey, or perhaps a lion swishing its tame tail. After which it visits an expensive cabaret, and drifts at last into the final kiss and embrace.

THEME, SIMPLE OR BIG

The theme, the element of purpose, gives character to a play. It is the force of some intention moving to a definite end. The theme may be simple or it may be big. The simple theme interests the spectator in one particular group of characters. The big theme centers his thoughts on some issue of more general human interest.

Those plays in which virtue triumphs over vice are the most common examples of the use of a simple theme. They are usually of the triangle type—a hero, a heroine and a villain. With new treatment the theme has been worked over in a way to give strength of purpose to many plays. "Way Down East"

has such a theme. It has been used effectively, too, in many comedies. "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" is a comedy with a big theme—the advance which civilization has made and the power of scientific knowledge over charlatanism and superstition.

"Male and Female," picturized by Cecil De Mille from J. M. Barrie's stage play, "The Admirable Crichton," has a big theme. A group of characters are shipwrecked on a desert island. In the group are an English nobleman, his two daughters, two of his servants and a young man belonging to the aristocracy. They find themselves in a state of savagery, stripped of all the luxuries of civilization to which they have been accustomed. They have only the torn, wet clothing which they wear. To live they must find food and build some sort of habitation for protection. Under the stress of circumstances the characters who have been pampered and weakened by their social environment are absolutely inefficient. One of the servants—a butler—because of his innate executive ability—rises to the situation and proves himself the master. The aristocrats bow to the leadership of their former servant. In this entirely new environment he builds a new social scheme of things in which he himself is king.

After having lived for some time on this desert island the group is finally rescued by a passing ship. Once more in their old environment, the aristocrats again take on their attitude of social superiority, and the servant drops back into his former habit of servitude. Racial inheritances had made this servant a man of initiative, a leader. But the environment into which he was born had cramped the exercise of his innate powers.

Innumerable variations of this theme may be worked out in different photodramas—the power of environment over inheritance. Much of our crime is due to it. Men who have been in prison—the thinking ones—all bear witness to this power of environment.

THEME OF MOTHERHOOD

"Over the Hill" is built on the theme of motherhood and its tragedy of dependence. A mother is left homeless, with no means to care for herself in her old age. She is shifted about

from one of her children to the other. Then the son who has been considered the black sheep rescues his mother from the poorhouse. Whatever faults the story may have are all swept aside by the universal appeal of the theme. The promptings of mother love laid the foundation of human society and built the first homes. Rupert Hughes used this theme in "The Old Nest." Both of these stories use the theme of *sacrificial* mother love. There are many strong plays to be written around the new type of mother, the mother who is a working woman, the mother who has gained a broader knowledge of the world. Her loving devotion and effort offer stronger dramatic opportunities than exist in passive, sacrificial motherhood.

"Hairpins," produced by Thomas H. Ince, starring Enid Bennett, is built on a domestic theme. It shows us what a monotonous, sordid home life may do to a woman if she will let it. Many a wife becomes petty and uninteresting, and loses the love of her husband in such a life. His business life brings him bigger interests. To keep his companionship, she must also grow with him. Plays on this theme always appeal. There are many other domestic themes waiting to be used by the scenario writer.

The theme of "Milestones" is the tragedy of the utter domination of the child by the parent. One frequently sees such tragedies. Fathers and mothers make these mistakes in love. They want to shape the lives of their children quite regardless of what the children themselves may desire.

A VITAL EXAMPLE

"What's Your Hurry?" produced with Wallace Reid in the leading role has a particularly strong theme. The heavy trucks pounding through the rain, carrying their loads of dynamite to save an endangered dam, dignify the worth of utility. They preach the religion of labor. The young chap who drives the first truck, and encourages and commands the drivers of the following trucks, has been a reckless speeder, has led a flippanant sort of life. But in this night of big usefulness he finds himself. He discovers that courage and alertness of brain, instead of being spent in wasteful effort, must be exerted in useful service.

"Earthbound," written by Basil King and produced by Goldwyn, has immortality as its theme—life after death. This is perhaps the most fascinating subject that ever engaged the attention of mankind—this greatest of all mysteries. And it will continue to be so until the mystery is solved. Out of the miseries of the late war arose a tremendous heart-hunger for more light—more definite knowledge concerning the hereafter. In response to this feeling such pictures as "Earthbound" were produced. Other photoplays dealing with the same subject but with less dramatic power followed in rapid succession.

THEME OF COURAGE

The theme of "The Three Musketeers" is one of courage and adventure. With artistic handling, plays of this type have the charm of romance. It is that element of romantic adventure that makes for the success of western plays.

The theme, then, is the element which gives purpose to the photodrama. But the student must not confuse purpose with problem and propaganda. He must not confuse it with preaching. *He must always remember that preaching kills art.* The theme must be woven into the warp and woof of your play. Through a strong theme, deftly handled, run undercurrents of feeling—those subtle emanating waves that are felt but not easily described. One feels them on coming in personal contact with men and women of strong character. It is said of Abdul Balia that he was so imbued with his religion of humanity, with his great love for mankind, that one could feel a long way off these radiations from his personality. So one may feel these undercurrents of the dominant characteristic of any strong personality—ambition, power, kindness, etc. One can feel them in paintings that have big themes. Millet's "Angelus" and "The Man With the Hoe" are well known examples. It is good practice for the student to study the themes of great pictures. It helps him, too, in his visualization work.

MEMORABLE BIG THEMES

"The Miracle Man," with its big theme, has strong undercurrents of feeling. The spectator is touched by the same waves

of feeling as are the men and women in the play itself when they come in contact with that man of mysterious power and vision.

“Humoresque” has a great undercurrent of feeling. Its theme has been said to be one of motherhood. But it is really the paradox of life’s smiles through its tears—life’s eternal optimism. This is symbolized by the imbecile boy Manny—the human thing so brutally hurt and maimed by the powers of hate and greed, in whom the hopeful spirit of life always smiles out through tears.

The theme gives character to the photoplay. When it is a theme big enough to imbue the play with strong character undercurrents, under it run strong currents of feeling. The vital fault of mediocre photoplays is not in the plot, but in their feebleness of theme. The world is full of themes. The conflict of races has been seldom used and it offers a wealth of dramatic opportunity. To make the men and women of different countries understand each other better, that is the great social need—to dominate the hates rising from the misunderstandings of the races by the love of friendly co-operation is the work of the future.

REGENERATION

The regeneration of a human soul is a great theme. There are great themes in the idea of revenge frustrated by love, and in the theme of cowardice dominated by courage. “The Coward” was inspired by this last theme. There are many themes of fatherhood.

Let the student take the piece of Coppée narrative and put into it a dramatic theme of sacrifice. See what you can evolve from it and from those characters.

Get your themes from life. Get them, too, from books other than fiction, the ones that will give you a broader knowledge of life—books of history, philosophy, politics, criminology. Of course, you must not let other writers think for you. You must think for yourself. But you must learn what specialists along different lines have to teach you. You can always find a little time to read. Learn to see the beauties in common things, to catch the meaning underlying the incidents of every day life.

THE SEARCH FOR BEAUTY

A story is told of Ruskin. He stood with an important little man in front of one of Turner's pictures.

"We never see clouds like that," the important little man said, critically.

To which Ruskin made the quiet reply:

"Ah, but wouldn't you like to see clouds like that?"

Learn to see clouds and the other beauties of nature with the eyes of an artist. Learn to look into the souls of men with the eyes of an intelligent student of life. It is the writer of this type who, building his plays on theme, fertilizes their roots with character and purpose.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is theme?
2. How does the photodrama of theme differ from the one of situation?
3. What is the difference between a simple and a big theme?
4. Name some simple themes.
5. Name some universal themes.
6. What is the difference between theme and propaganda?
7. What are undercurrents?
8. Write with few words the themes of some of the latest photodramas you have seen.

CHAPTER VI

PLOT

You have perhaps noticed the different ways in which different persons will tell the same story. One will be concise and definite. He will dexterously manipulate his incidents and make his point clear and emphatic. His every word holds your interest. His story's end gains your quick laugh or exclamation of shock, whichever it demands. Another person will tell the same story in a rambling, incoherent way. In the middle of his recital he will recall something that should have been told at the beginning. Before he reaches the climax the story has lost its point; he has only succeeded in being a bore.

In writing a photoplay, you are telling a story with the difference that, instead of using words alone, you are setting down a complete statement of visualized action. You must tell it dexterously and with interest and must make your final point—your climax—clear and emphatic. Keep these two different ways of telling a story in mind. It will help you in the study of plot.

PLOT MECHANISM

Plot is the mechanism of a story or a play—its construction. Think of the most perfect piece of mechanism you know. A watch is the usual illustration. Its every part is necessary to the whole. No tiny piece of its mechanism can be left out. Nor may anything be added. The thing is complete and symmetrical in all of its parts.

The same is true of a well built plot. The writer—like the watchmaker—works to adjust perfectly the different parts of his plot's mechanism. He strives to make each part work smoothly with all the other parts. He throws aside anything which may be detrimental to the whole. And the theme—the play's purpose, its incentive—is like the mainspring of the watch; it drives all of the plot's action.

Building a plot is a work of cooperation. All creative work is cooperative. So in art the different elements must cooperate to produce the beauty and purpose of the whole. If they do not, the result is like the poorly told story—incoherent and pointless.

All art must have unity. So photodrama—a form of art—must have unity of action in its plot construction. There are two other dramatic unities—the unities of time and place. Most practical playwrights—even Shakespeare—have disregarded these last two unities. But Ibsen—who was a master of technique—used the three unities in some of his plays. His plays, “A Doll’s House” and “Ghosts,” illustrate this use of the unities. Charles Rann Kennedy observed all of the unities in the construction of his play, “The Servant in the House.”

UNITIES INSURE COHERENCY

Although it is not necessary to preserve the unities of time and place, their use in degree insures more coherency of plot development. Unity of time demanded, according to Aristotle and other early Greek dramatists, that the action of a play be compressed into the space of twenty-four hours. Unity of place demanded that such action take place in a single locality—on the stage, in a single setting. A photodrama would have to be of a most unusual character to conform to the unity of place—to “shoot” it all on one setting without making its action monotonous. Photodrama needs more variety of background. *But it is best to compress the action of your photoplay into as short a space of time as possible, and to keep the action in and about the same general locality.* Do not spread it over years or over the map.

Photodrama, however, must have unity of action. This is absolute. It means that a certain group of characters must start from a given point of cause and move through certain organized action of other causes and effects to a final result.

EXPLANATION OF UNITY

Edwin L. Shuman has given a good illustration of this unity, which is a law underlying all art. He compares Hoffman’s picture of the Child Jesus in the Temple with a photograph of a class of high school pupils. In the Hoffman painting, as

you know, the boy Christ stands in the center of a group of learned doctors. Their faces are all turned toward him. Even the rabbi in the background has his eyes fixed intently upon the wonderful boy whose lips are uttering such strange wisdom. The artist has made the high light to fall upon the face of the young Christ. The attitudes and expressions of the others all take their meaning from his face. The lights and shadows, the poses, the coloring, the background all contribute to the same central figure. The result is a satisfying sense of perfect unity. The artist has expressed his theme, his purpose, through this cooperation of all these different elements in his picture. He has produced a work of art that is definite, coherent and has character.

On the other hand, the group photograph of high school pupils has no such unity. The lights and shadows may be artistically arranged. But each member of the class is looking straight out of the picture, or in any direction that happens to be convenient. Each one is thinking of different things. *The scene has no centralized interest*—it lacks unity. It is a bit of life, but not a work of art.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

A play must have a unity of purpose. All of its various elements must cooperate to such an end. Only with this cooperation can the result be a work of art. Things of lesser value must be sacrificed to emphasize the interests which are of most value. In the different scenes the characters of lesser importance must be used to heighten the significance of the scene's dominant character. And all must be tributary to the evolution of a main character. The whole must have a definite development from a starting point to a stopping point. *And it must have continuous suspense.*

The elements of plot development are incident, situation, crisis, climax and ending.

An incident is a happening which may be aside from the main design, but which must contribute to it. A situation is a temporary state of affairs at a moment of dramatic action. A crisis is the decisive moment in which a state of affairs is modified or changed. A climax is the most intense crisis of

which any given plot is capable; the moment toward which the plot complications have moved. In comedy it is called denouement, which means the untying of a knot; in tragedy it is called the catastrophe.

An incident is one of the many happenings of every day life; it may be trivial in itself, yet productive of a great issue. In Chicago a cow once kicked over a lamp, and this incident resulted in the burning of a whole city. So in photodrama, as in life, an incident may seem inconsequential in itself, yet be an instrument of destiny. Indeed, it is the writer's business to make it such. From a series of incidents evolves a situation—a temporary state of the relation of affairs at a moment of dramatic action.

INCIDENT AND SITUATION

Let us first thoroughly understand the elements of incident and situation and their relation to each other. To do this, let us illustrate.

Two lovers are riding horseback on the highway. The sudden appearance of a tramp from behind some wayside bushes frightens the horse the young woman is riding. It jumps and throws its rider. The tramp catches her in her fall and saves her from being hurt. The appearance of the tramp, the frightening of the horse, the fall and rescue of the young woman are all incidents. Then the lover, who has dismounted, comes into the scene and he and the tramp suddenly recognize one another. The lover shows a quick flash of consternation which grows into fear. The tramp, noting the lover's agitation, smiles faintly. All of which by play between the two men is lost upon the young woman, who is occupied in the effort to soothe her horse. When she does finally note her lover's agitation, she attributes it, quite naturally, to anxiety on her account. She tries to reassure him by telling him that she is neither hurt nor frightened. We now have drama—for we have conflict—and we also have a situation. The several incidents have produced this situation. It creates suspense. And that is the mission of a situation. It should cause a question. What is going to happen now? In our present case, the question would be, what are these two men to one another?

THE PREMISE SITUATION

Let us suppose that this situation is the opening situation of a play. It would then be the play's introduction, its premise—something to explain or something that will aid in explaining what follows. The introduction of a play should arouse the interest by this use of suspense. It is not enough to introduce the characters in picturesque settings. It is not enough to show them talking, eating, arranging flowers, reading letters or gazing in the direction of the camera. Their actions must be productive of a situation. Remember the watch simile—every part of its mechanism is of use to the whole. So every incident must do its part in completing the mechanism of the whole play.

Aside from helping to build a situation, an incident may be used also to reveal character. A man's treatment of an animal or a child may tell much of his character. An incident is used for this purpose in "Hail the Woman." A kitten climbs playfully up the leg of the harsh old Puritan father. The latter, in his treatment of the innocent little animal, shows that he has no real kindliness of nature. And when one has no kindness in his nature, he has no feeling of joy in life. He has never learned to laugh with his heart. Love is the only thing which can melt the winter's frost in the heart of such a man. And love finally melts this old man's heart—the love of a little child.

INCIDENTAL REVELATION OF CHARACTER

An incident that shows a man's feeling toward flowers, a painting, a piece of sculpture, a book or anything beautiful, will display some evidence of his character. Is there anything in him which responds to beauty?

An incident may show one's innate shyness, his sensitiveness. It may show the habit of slovenliness. An incident with a mirror or with jewels may show vanity. One with money may show miserliness, or extravagance, or generosity, or the fear which accompanies poverty. An incident with a whip may show cruelty. One with food may show gluttony, or delicacy, or appetite, or invalidism. Or it may show a knowledge or ignorance of social usage. An incident may show one's state of mind:—love, happiness, anticipation, exhilaration, relief, triumph, or hate, fear, discontent, anxiety, mortification, disappointment, regret, exasperation, discouragement, bitterness, envy.

When Nan, in "Hail the Woman," drops her father's coffee cup, the incident reveals her perturbed state of mind. It leads to the situation in which the father makes the discovery of the thing which results in Nan's tragedy.

The blowing of a factory whistle, the ringing of a bell, or the chime of a clock may swerve a character's whole life movement. The incident of the horn in "The Little Minister" was the keynote to the situation and climax that followed.

INFLUENCE OF SMALL HAPPENINGS

So, in real life, we are constantly revealing ourselves—our characters, our thoughts, our feelings—in incident. So our lives are constantly being changed and influenced by happenings. We move through a series of incidents on the way to our big moments—our climaxes—of joy or sorrow, love or hate, inspiration or disillusionment. And drama, which is the mirror held up to life, must build itself in this same way. But in building drama, the writer must choose the incidents necessary to the carrying out of his purpose.

Before going on with the other elements which comprise unity of action, the student is advised to spend time on this study of incident. Put down in your note book incidents which reveal character; ones which show physical condition or state of mind; ones which bring characters together in friendly or unfriendly contact, and are productive of situation.

DEFINITE APPLICATION OF INCIDENT

Put into the Coppée narrative incidents which reveal the different characters and their relationship to each other. To illustrate: The woman and her husband, the ringmaster, are in their small dressing-room. Make him show the brutal selfishness of his character in his manner of getting ready for the evening's performance. He usurps all the space before the crude little dressing table. He demands the woman's constant aid. She must get herself ready the best way she can during those intervals in which she is not forced to help him. The way in which she slyly adjusts the rose in her hair reveals that she is thinking of its coquettish appeal to someone other than her

husband. She may have a pet parrot which annoys the ring-master and he may throw something at it. Such an incident brings a flash of hatred from the woman.

In an adjoining dressing-room are the clown, the blind clarinet-player and the four young athletes. They, too, are getting ready for the evening's show. Some little incident of thoughtful helpfulness on the part of the clown for the blind clarinet-player may reveal a kindly nature in the former.

Then the woman, with the air of wanting to meet someone clandestinely, slips slyly away from her husband and out into the tent auditorium. She is wearing her thin ballet garb. The night is cold and she shivers. The clown stands nearby, smoking. His air is one of secret waiting. He and the woman meet. Both exchange a look of love. He notes that she is cold and turns quickly back into his dressing room and brings his coat. He is wrapping the coat around the woman when the husband appears on the scene. The clown and the woman, being absorbed in one another, do not at first note the husband. The latter watches an instant, with gross contempt, before speaking. The clown and the woman start guiltily. Both show fear. But in the woman's fear on the clown's account is something also of shrinking dread of the husband's brutal abuse of herself. The clown's fear grows out of his protective love for the woman.

In this series of incidents our characters have revealed themselves and revealed also their respective relationships. Such incidents have produced a situation in which there is suspense. What is going to happen? This situation is our play's foundation. None of this dramatic device has been useless.

GROWTH OF SITUATIONS FROM INCIDENTS

You may have made other drama out of the possibilities of this Coppée narrative. If so, build up, in the same way, a series of incidents. One of the young athletes might be a boy of seven or eight and the woman's son. Later, the husband, to torture the woman and avenge himself, might do something vicious to this boy. Or the small boy might be the clown's son. *These suggestions are made to help the student work out dramatic situations.*

Try to think of new incidents other than the ones which have been used many times on the screen. When your observation discovers one, jot it down in your notebook. Recall incidents in which fate has played important parts in your own life and the lives of your friends. It is these little incidents which build up the drama of life.

“Think naught a trifle though
It small appear;
Small sands the mountain,
Moments make the year,
And trifles life.”

Every incident in your photodrama must have some value in the development of the whole. The action of each incident must be visualized. From incidents must develop situations in which there is the element of suspense.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the plot of a photodrama?
2. What are the unities?
3. What are the elements of the unity of action?
4. What are incident, situation, crisis, climax and ending?
5. What are the values of incident?
6. What is the relation of incident to situation?
7. What is the mission of situation?
8. What is a photoplay's premise?

CHAPTER VII

PLOT—(Continued)

You have learned the relation of incident to the unity of action and of plot development. You know that a happening, trifling in itself, may be used by fate to bring about a result of import in the lives of a group of individuals. You know that incidents growing out of the daily lives of people are brought about by acts rising from habit—of impulse, or accident, or they are the result of their relationships with other people. You have learned that from a series of incidents rise situations—another element in the unity of action. You know that incidents, unlike situations, have no inherent suspense. You must understand, too, that your premise—your first situation—must be logically sufficient for the plot's complication, which is built upon it. Otherwise your photoplay will be as a house built upon a crumbling foundation.

THE NECESSITY OF CRISIS

Having learned these things, you are ready now to proceed to the understanding of crisis—the next element in the unity of action.

Crisis is that point or portion of the plot in which conflicting interests or desires meet and demand immediate change or adjustment. If there is only a struggle, with no necessity for an immediate decision, the state of affairs is a situation, not a crisis.

MOVEMENT TOWARD A CRISIS

In the preceding chapter we created a situation from the incident of a tramp frightening a horse and saving the woman rider from hurt in her fall. The recognition of one another on the part of the tramp and the lover stirs an unexpected interest and suspense. Let us follow these characters a little further.

The scene is in the lover's prosperous looking law office. The lover is standing by his desk. He has finished dictating a letter

to his stenographer. His movements show him to be preoccupied and worried. He plays nervously with a paper-cutter. The office-boy comes in and announces the tramp. The boy's air shows that he has been forced to make this announcement, and that he does it with a certain feeling of contempt. He is surprised when his employer expresses—hesitatingly—his willingness to see the client, who is the tramp.

During the scene which follows between the tramp and the lover, it is revealed that the two have been friends, and that the tramp has recently been liberated from prison. It is further revealed that he was tried and imprisoned for a crime committed by the lover. He demands reparation. He was formerly a broker, and he wants money—a large sum—to re-establish himself in the business world. The lover refuses to pay this sum. He tells him that he cannot do so without ruining himself. The tramp makes threats. He has come into possession of certain knowledge which he will make public. Such publicity, though it will exonerate him, will still leave him moneyless. The lover remains firm in his attitude of refusal. The tramp grows more desperately insistent. He knows that the lover has political aspirations. This publicity will ruin his opportunities. Then the woman—the lover's fiancée—opens the door and peeks in laughingly. The tramp waits threateningly. Now is his time to make the first revelation of the secret which he holds. The lover hesitates, then makes a quick movement of acquiescence. He will do what the tramp has demanded. So the situation, which has become a crisis, is adjusted, and not allowed to come to a climax. But the spectator knows that a climax must come eventually. During the interim he experiences suspense.

AVERTING THE CLIMAX

In "Hail the Woman" various incidents contribute to the building of the situation rising from the relationship of Nan and David. Other incidents move the plot to the situation in David's home when the father, mother and Judith discover this relationship. The situation becomes a crisis, which might be the climax of disclosure to David's larger social world. But the grim old father—coldly ambitious for David's success—averts such a climax by an adjustment. He gives Nan's father a check for a thousand dollars.

Later there is Judith's incidental meeting with the writer—a man of the world, who is always studying life as you, a student of photodrama, are studying it through observation. He is interested in Judith as "story material." He invites her into his summer cottage and talks with her. He reads to her from a book he has written. Judith, dissatisfied with her own environment, is eager to learn more about the larger life of the city. Dominated by what this literary man has told her, she approaches a crisis in her own life.

There is the incident of the peeping rural lover. This is followed by the incident of Judith slapping this would-be lover's face, and running away. This slap, tingling in his blood, impels the man to his final cowardly assault upon the purity of Judith's character. The scene played at the foot of the stairs in Judith's home is a situation which becomes a crisis. Conflicting interests have met and demand immediate adjustment. The harsh old father turns Judith out of doors. Judith expresses her independence and her willingness to go. Her home has grown too hateful for further endurance.

So the plot moves on, impelled by incidents which evolve situations, and situations which grow into crises.

USEFUL SCREEN STUDY

The student is advised to study other screen plays in this same way. Note where they are weak and where they are strong in situation and crisis. Think out ways in which they might be strengthened. A play must have several minor situations. And it must have at least three major situations which grow into crises. *Every cause must have its effect, and every effect its cause*, a fact we repeat because of its importance.

The portion of the photoplay which includes the incidents and minor situations that develop into major situations and crises is called an episode. It corresponds with an act in a stage play. The curtain falls on the "psychological moment" at the end of the act in the plot of a stage play. This same moment is reached also in a photodrama.

The climax, the fourth element in the unity of action, is the point in which there is the greatest suspense of which any given plot is capable. Climax is the Greek word for ladder; in drama

it is dramatic height. The complications can go no further. Something definite must happen. There can be no further adjustment or evasion.

APPROACHING DRAMATIC HEIGHT

In "Hail the Woman" the plot begins to mount the ladder to its dramatic height when Judith determines to take David's little son home and to fight for his rights. The time of mounting this ladder of climax, rung after rung, should be one of tense suspense. The movement must be accelerated. That is, the dramatic incidents must follow one after the other in quick succession. *This climax must be the logical, natural and inevitable outcome of the dramatic conflict which this particular association of human interests has induced.* Nothing must be dragged in simply for the purpose of untangling your complications and thus bringing about your logical end. Do not drag in a railroad wreck or an automobile accident to kill off the villain. In the first place, it is to be hoped that our students will not create the sort of villain who needs to be disposed of in this fashion. Remember that all men are both strong and weak, good and bad. They vary in degree. Some, because of their inheritances and environment, are weaker morally than are others.

In the second place, no railroad or automobile wreck, or fire or explosion has any inherent dramatic value in itself. It may be a happening, an incident or a spectacle. If human life is endangered, it will, of course, induce a feeling of shock and horror. But it is the human interests involved in such catastrophe which give it dramatic value. An heroic rescue—perhaps endangering the rescuer's life—is drama, for it is courage—the thing inside the individual character—in conflict with a situation, with environment. But to give it climactic power, the whole play must have been built to this situation. It must be the natural outcome of the dramatic conflict which the play's particular association of human interests has induced.

WEAK CLIMAX MAY RUIN PHOTOPLAY

A weak or unnatural climax may ruin the entire effect of a play. The climax must realize everything or more than has been expected. When it realizes the thing expected in an unexpected way it has real "punch."

Sometimes the writer will use a climax in the wrong place in a play. He is like the story-teller who weakens or loses his point by telling it before he comes to it. Such misplacing of climax is called anti-climax. An anti-climax is a fatal thing in a play.

A little story which Booker T. Washington liked to tell may illustrate this thing of anti-climax. He met a colored woman on the street one day and said to her :

“Where are you going, Miranda?”

The lady thus addressed smiled and answered:

“I ain’t goin’ no wheres, Mistah Washington. I done been where I’s goin’.”

Unlike Miranda, the anti-climax is a thing which has not been where it is going. And it is entirely out of place where it has stopped. The student must guard closely against making this sort of error. The anti-climax is an illusive thing, and will sometimes play hide-and-seek with a writer. You may avoid it if you watch your crises, and never let a crisis become a climax until the artistic time for so doing.

THE PLAY’S END

After the climax comes the last element in the unity of dramatic action—the end, the adjustment or solution. Much has been said and written about the “happy ending.” But whatever the ending, it must be logical and true. Like the climax, it must grow out of the play’s association of characters. If it is an unpleasant ending, it must leave the auditor convinced that, under the circumstances, it could not have been different.

In “Hail the Woman” (as finally produced) Mr. Ince has used an artistic and unhackneyed ending. He does not conclude Judith’s love affair for it is merely incidental. He ends with the triumph of the play’s theme—a modern woman’s defiance of the double code of morals. The spirit of the dead Nan comes back to Judith, who stands alone in the garden. This spirit does not go into the house where David and his father and mother are gathered about the little child who has led them. The spirit hand lays itself on Judith’s hand, and the spectator glories in the soul loyalty of two women—and their triumph over a social injustice.

Love is a much bigger thing than the passion of a man for a maid. Love is the great building force—the power which will reconstruct our many human and social weaknesses.

BEGINNING—MIDDLE—END

You have learned something of the different elements which comprise the unity of action. The old rule of drama states that a play must have three parts—a beginning, a middle and an end. Perhaps it is better to say a premise—or foundation—a complication and an adjustment. It may be compared with a day of particular events in a lifetime—a sunrise which reveals troublesome complications, hours of strenuous happenings, and a quiet sunset of adjustment.

Build your photoplay made from the Coppée narrative into more situations, crises, a climax and an end. Learn how these vagabond showmen travel in France. Learn all of the detail of their environment that has picture value.

You cannot make a play out of a mere string of happenings. These happenings must build situations which have suspense. The situations must grow into crises. A final crisis must reach a climax that will lead to a solution.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What relation has incident to every-day life?
2. Create an original situation with incidents.
3. What is the relation of crisis to situation?
4. What is your understanding of cause and effect?
5. What is an episode?
6. What is a climax?
7. What is an anti-climax?
8. What is your understanding of human service?

CHAPTER VIII

COMEDY IN LIFE AND IN DRAMA

We have been told that all peoples of the globe weep in the same language, but laugh in different languages. When one takes a little time to think this over, he knows it to be true. A Frenchman will laugh at something which will leave a Norwegian cold. An American will laugh hilariously at a joke which makes no humorous appeal to an Englishman.

Yet in spite of this understanding that the world laughs in different languages, Charlie Chaplin is the one being today who has made the whole world kin. He stirs laughter in the American, the Englishman, the Frenchman, the Italian, the German, the Scandinavian, the Slav, the Japanese and Chinaman. Lenine, the Russian, said in an interview that the man whom he most wanted to meet in the United States was Charlie Chaplin.

TENSELY HUMAN COMEDY

How may we reconcile this comedian's worldwide popularity with the fact that peoples of different nations weep in the same language but laugh in different languages? It seems a flat contradiction. But is it? It is understandable when one takes the time to analyze it.

Under all of Charles Chaplin's comedy, and touching it closely, there is a strain of pathos. One feels—though perhaps not entirely realizing it—that he has the power which, if he wished to use it, would bring the tear with the smile. In fact, he does do this—in "Shoulder Arms," in "A Dog's Life," in "Easy Street" and "The Kid." One sees what he reveals and feels what he hides. And the things one feels are the racial heart inheritances which make the whole world kin. These have been touched upon in the chapter on characterization. His comedy is both of the intellect and the heart. Therefore, it is tensely human. Being so human, it is universal. The intensely human comedy is the effective, the really great comedy every one understands.

Some one has said that life is a comedy to the man who thinks, and a tragedy to the man who feels. But when a man both thinks and feels he touches life on many sides. And the dramatic writer must be able to do this. The one who can see life's comedy and feel life's pathos will be able to bring more of humanness into his work. If he sees only life's comedy, or if he feels only life's tragedy, his work is bound to be artificial, for life is a thing of both tears and smiles. You can never get away from this fact. We think and feel at the same time. So comedy is drama just as much as is tragedy.

The French try to divorce comedy from tragedy in their drama. French scholars affirmed that comedy was entirely a matter of intellect. They criticised Shakespeare for using the comedy of the grave diggers in *Hamlet*, the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* and the Porter in *Macbeth*. But Shakespeare did not laugh with his brain alone. He laughed with his whole soul. Comedy of the intellect alone is heartless. A dramatist of pure wit lives on the surface of life. He does not go down to its roots.

DEFINITIONS OF HUMOR

Humor has been defined in various ways: the enjoyment of the fantastic, the grotesque, the incongruous, the frank enjoyment of the imperfect. It is all of these. But it is something more. It is the springtime spirit in man, the joy of living, the child play spirit, the eternal optimism which is always trying to express itself. Man is not as yet a perfect creature. He is still in the making. That he can see his own imperfections, and enjoy them, is the most wholesomely human as well as most encouraging thing in life. Some cannot.

The father in "Hail the Woman" is a character of this latter type. Such individuals have no sense of humor. They see life from only one angle—the angle of their own egotistic desires. They realize nothing of harmony for their song of life has only one note. They offer little of contrast, and it is contrast which makes both people and life endurable.

Contrast in drama offers one of the values of strongest appeal. Monotony varies and irritates—both the monotony of persons and of conditions. One grows tired of the individual

who is always the same. One even grows tired of the character who is always just good, who never shows any human weaknesses. It is this desire for contrast that makes us feel an interest in criminals, or in any individual who breaks the rules of convention. It is this thing of contrast which makes temperamental people interesting.

An individual of temperament, who also has a sense of humor, is always more or less fascinating. Babbie in "The Little Minister" is such a character. The characters written for Constance Talmadge and Marguerite Clark have been of this type. David Warfield's "Music Master" is a stage characterization that has this same charm.

GREAT CHARACTERS HAVE SENSE OF HUMOR

In a great characterization there must always be contrast. Great people are many-sided. They are both weak and strong. And the greatest characters—the ones who are the most human—have always a sense of humor. These are the individuals whom the world loves. We respect and feel awe for the characters of serious power and strength of purpose. But we love the ones who can smile at life. A dramatist has accomplished much when he has created a character of this kind. To do so he must use contrast. He must choose incidents which will bring out the individual's weaknesses as well as his strength.

One method of using contrast is to make two characters of different impulses play opposite one another. If you are developing a character possessed of a single serious purpose, it is always best to contrast him with one who has a sense of humor. When all of the characters in a play live the same tense and serious lives—as did the father in "Hail the Woman"—then the play as a whole fails in harmony. It lacks the human quality. It becomes strained and artificial in places. Watch these places in your own photoplays. You can always bring back the human quality with some touch of humor. And this humor is strongest in its appeal when it is a part of a characterization.

INCONGRUITY AND TRUTH

Never be afraid to let a character do a thing incongruous—*if it is the true thing which he might, under the circumstances*

do. A character may always be made a sympathetic one by the use of a touch of humor—if you do not allow him to take himself too seriously.

It is this contrast of strength and humorous weaknesses—this tense humanness—which gives “Humoresque” its greatest charm. The scene in the pawnshop, when the father buys the violin for his small son, is one never to be forgotten. “The Miracle Man” too has many of these same touches. There have been photoplays which have stopped just short of being big plays because they lacked the contrasting qualities which humor can give.

Humor which is biting and satirical also has its value in certain characterizations. Wit is an appeal to the mind. But it is the humor of the heart that the whole world loves. In it is the element of courage.

“Some things are of that nature as to make
One’s fancy chuckle, while his heart doth ache.”

And Joyce Kilmer said:

“There are certain things that are elementally funny, that make all people laugh who have any laughter in their souls.”

COMEDY OF THE HEART

The comedy that we send our friends to see, and will gladly see again, is this comedy of the heart. For it contains not only the joy of life, but the truth of life. We may even say that it contains life’s simple, work-a-day ideals.

Take the character of the clown in the Coppée narrative, and see if you can develop him into a character of contrasted comedy and seriousness. Create pictorial incidents which help you to do this.

Never try to divorce comedy from drama. By so doing you are trying to divorce comedy from life. In life there is always a subtle mingling of the serious and comic, of tears and laughter.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the type of universal comedy?
2. What relation does comedy bear to life?
3. What relation does comedy bear to drama?
4. What relation does humor bear to drama?
5. What relation does humor bear to character?
6. What is your understanding of contrast?
7. What special values can comedy give to photodrama?
8. In what type of characterization would you use a biting, sarcastic wit?

CHAPTER IX

HEROIC VALUES

What human quality is it that most makes for heroism? You will at once answer "courage." And you are right. Courage is the human quality which commands universal respect. If a man possess courage his world will forgive him many faults. A coward always excites contempt.

Down through the centuries man has paid homage to the heroes of the race. Songs have been sung about them; great literature has been written about them, and their deeds have been extolled in oratory.

HEROIC APPEAL THE SOUL OF DRAMA

Heroism is a vital thing in man's existence. And no drama may be written without some sort of heroic appeal. It is said that plot is the drama's form, and that situation is its backbone. It may be added that its heroic appeal is its soul. A play's plot may be perfectly built. It may have a sufficient number of dramatic situations which lead to correct crises. Its right crisis may develop into the climax. It may have all the elements of unity of action. It may even preserve the unities of time and place. But if it lacks the soul of heroic appeal, it is only a good piece of mechanism.

The student, however, must not confuse heroic appeal with theme. The theme of a play is its fundamental purpose, its incentive. *The heroic appeal is dependent upon the action of the play's characters in the theme's development.* A person may have a certain life purpose, but his success in carrying out that purpose is dependent upon his own acts. His purpose cannot be achieved unless his acts bring about such result. It is the same in the building of a play. Theme and heroic appeal, therefore, have the difference of purpose and action.

HEROISM EVERYWHERE

The race has sung the glory of its heroes, but all heroes do not achieve fame. The every day, commonplace man may be a hero. The man in business, or the one working in a bank, an office, a store, a factory or a mine, or the one on the farm ploughing the fields may be a hero. The engineer building a bridge or a railroad may be a hero. So may any one of his employees. The preacher, lawyer, editor or college professor may be a hero. The young man or young woman struggling against big odds for an education lives much of heroism, so does the father or the mother who is working to bring up a family of children, so do the pioneer men and women who go into the wilds and build up civilization. Heroism does not depend upon one's social station. It depends upon the spirit in which one meets life or a situation and masters its difficulties.

One may always find the heroic close by. We cannot too often impress this fact. For so many students seem to think it necessary to go far away to some other country, or to some other time in history to find a hero. Study the heroism in the lives of those whom you meet, those close to you, in your own home, your neighborhood, your town, or at your place of business.

The heroic is always with you. It is for you to learn what really makes heroism and how to discover it. It is not always some spectacular show of courage. It may be entirely unconscious of itself. Indeed, true heroism always is unconscious of itself. If it becomes self-conscious, or if it sings its own praises, or if it takes itself with the slightest degree of bombastic seriousness, then it loses its heroic values.

KINDS AND SHADES OF COURAGE

Courage is the human quality which makes for heroism. But there are many different kinds and shades of courage. There is the courage of expression and the courage of repression, of speech and of silence. It is sometimes more courageous to keep silent than to speak, and there are times when to keep silent is cowardly.

There is the courage of action and the courage of composure. Some occasions require quick action, militant, perhaps, as a fight or war. Other occasions demand calm restraint.

There is the courage of endurance, or of martyrdom, and the courage of defiance. There is the courage of attainment as well as that of sacrifice. There is the courage of duty, also that of evasion. It is sometimes more courageous to shirk than to assume what others assert to be one's duty. There is the courage of conviction, also of success or failure. There is the courage of monotony as well as the courage of adventure.

ANALYSIS OF COURAGE

So we might continue the recital of the different sorts and shades of courage. But we have enumerated enough to make the student understand. You are advised to fit these different attitudes of courage to situations in which they may find expression. Think of some situation in which it would be more courageous to remain silent than to speak. Watch the screen plays that you witness for these different expressions of courage. Determine whether they are falsely or truly expressed.

It is this shading in courage, the sustaining of these fine ethical values, which is the thing of greatest difficulty in photodrama building. It takes the most of thought and study. Just the faintest deviation from the true attitude—the one which a character would, under the circumstances, naturally assume—may sometimes throw a whole play out of focus. It may weaken all of the succeeding situations, the climax and the end.

“THE MAN FROM LOST RIVER”

To illustrate let us take the photoplay “The Man from Lost River,” written by Katherine Newlin Burt, directed by Frank Lloyd, and produced by Goldwyn. The theme is one of courage and cowardice, most deftly worked out. The scenes are laid in a California lumber-camp. Two men are in love with the same girl who works in the camp boarding-house. One of these men is boss of the lumber-camp gang. The other is a young easterner who has come west in search of adventure. The girl, an orphan, is of finer caliber than her associates. She, too, is from the east.

The lumber-camp boss has led the rough life of his environment. He is a driver of men, and quick and brutal with his fists. He has gained his education in the school of hard knocks

and knows little or nothing about books. The eastern man, who is the younger, has had college and social advantages.

In the beginning of the play this eastern chap seems to have every advantage. The fact that he has been a social idler who has gone to work gives him a touch of heroism. The spectator is inclined to like him and to sympathize with his initial love affair with the girl.

But the camp boss has courage, and the easterner is a coward. These two types of men are played against one another. The incidents offer constant contrast. The development is adroit and sure. An early scene shows the young easterner at work with his ax in the woods chopping a tree. He stops and looks at his blistered hands. If he had smiled at the discomfort of this new experience—shown a sense of humor, or the slightest indication of being game—his heroism would have been established. Things which he does later—up to a given point—might be forgiven. But he does not smile. He is sorry for himself, and the spectator who has been prepared to like him, begins to feel a trifle doubtful of him. Then occurs an incident which does redeem him for the time being. He rescues the girl from a falling tree which might have killed her. This shows that he is possessed of physical courage.

Then the next scene shows him at the supper table in the camp boarding-house. The other workmen at the table bolt their food in the manner of uncouth men of their type. Again it is hoped that the eastern boy will show a sense of humor and adapt himself to the situation. Instead he leaves the table in disgust.

SKILLFUL BALANCE OF SYMPATHY

So from situation to situation the story shows this young man to be an innate coward—a moral coward. It unexpectedly, too, develops the rough camp boss as a man of not only physical but of moral courage. But all through the first part of the play, the slightest thing might have thrown the sympathy to the eastern man. And if the author had created him with a sense of humor he might have held our sympathy all through the play. For the power to laugh at one's own discomforts and one's suffering coming through one's own mistakes, carries with it always some degree of courage. If the easterner had been

created with this sense of humor, the power of the camp boss would have been greatly lessened, and the play's climax weakened. Two or three faintly whimsical smiles or some little whimsical incident would have done it. But the man's continuous self-pity kills all of the respect which the first evidence of his physical courage induces.

At last an epidemic of flu seizes the camp. The eastern man cowardly deserts the sick girl, whom he has married. He is afraid of the disease. By this time the play's action has made moral cowardice seem much more detestable than physical cowardice. And is it not? Analyze this further. It is easy to create a hero with physical courage, one who is quick to use his fists or perform some act of physical daring. But the hero or heroine of moral courage is much more difficult to evolve.

STUDYING HEROIC PSYCHOLOGY

If at any time you find yourself in doubt as to the heroic psychology of one of your characters—in doubt as to just what he would do under the circumstances—talk it over with some one whom you know. Get the viewpoint of another. If you are a man, talk your characters over occasionally with a woman. If you are a woman, talk with some man. Men and women see things from different angles. Talking a puzzling situation over will often settle the treatment of it in your own mind. Do not hurry. Take time to be correct. It pays in the end.

Never let a character become self-conscious of his own heroism or take it seriously—not unless you are creating that objectionable type. You know how you feel toward this sort of person whom you meet in life. Sometimes, of course, this thing is done through the fault of the director or the screen actor, not through the fault of the author. But this should not make the author any less painstaking in his work. *Just as soon as one begins to slight his work—to leave it to the director—he sounds his own doom as a writer.* The artist—the one who writes real photoplays—grows always more and more painstaking.

TRUTH AND PURITY

It is the moral heroic values—the ones more subtle and more difficult to evolve—which are the biggest force in your

play. They must be most deftly handled to bring the desired results. *They must be true.* The crime of the screen has not been in the picturing of immorality. It is a part of life. But the crime has been in not picturing it with truth.

That brings us to another phase of this topic of heroic or moral values. The photoplay may and must handle incidents of great moral delicacy; but the general purpose of the play must be one of purity. That must be the purpose of both the author and the producer. The public may for a time accept the thing of purely sensual appeal, but it soon revolts. The big public wants the clean and the wholesome. We have warned against preaching in your play. We still warn you against it, but the lesson must be there.

Your play must first entertain, but that is not its only function. It must appeal to the heart and to the moral sense. Remember that in this work you are associating yourself with one of the biggest educational forces in the world today. A photoplay acts upon the lives of millions of individuals. Its results are hidden in a multitude of hearts. Every Palmer student must be impressed with the responsibility that is assumed in taking up this study. You are not only one of the world's entertainers, but one of its educators. You must want not only your public's laughter, tears and applause, but you must also want its respect.

MENACE OF UNPUNISHED VICE

Vice, as depicted on the screen, becomes dangerous to the public good when it is pictured with untruth or allowed to go unpunished. Some of the "crook" plays have been of this type. They have had heroes who have been spectacular and artificial; and they have made criminal adventure alluring.

Some truly heroic act of a so-called criminal always makes appeal. For it is one of the strongest instincts in human nature to want to see a character redeem himself. The return of the prodigal—whether this prodigal be a woman or man—always stirs sympathy and brings tears. For in watching such redemption the spectator is really watching *himself*, his own secret heart impulses and desires. In this other man's place he would welcome such opportunity to retrieve himself, to show his true character. We have learned that all men are both good and bad.

But the redemption must never be made mawkish and artificial. Its worth depends upon its simple sincerity and genuineness. The world is sick to death of mock heroics, or empty theatrics. One feels more respect for the man who is bad and makes no pretense, than for the one who makes mawkish parade of his goodness.

UNDESIRABLE ARTIFICIALITY

No matter what your type of hero—a western cowboy, an Alaskan miner, a prize-fighter, a preacher, or a New England farmer—he makes heroic appeal only when he is created true to type and to his type's moral standards. What has been said of heroes applies equally to heroines. Your public will refuse to admire on the screen a character whom in life they would despise because of his artificial heroics. Your hero will only gain what his worth and genuineness demands. His courage must be both of the blood and the soul.

Never let your hero or heroine become conscious of his or her own heroism. Not to do this takes careful watching. Put much thought in depicting your fine shades of courage. Many good photodramas fail in appeal because these finer shadings are not true to life.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What relation does heroic appeal bear to drama?
2. What is the difference between heroic appeal and theme?
3. Where may heroes be found?
4. Name some different situations of courage.
5. Why is moral courage stronger than physical courage? Give three examples and analyze.
6. What does self-consciousness of his own heroism do to a character?
7. When does vice, as depicted on the screen, become dangerous?
8. Why does the portrayal of soul redemption make such universal appeal?

CHAPTER X

SHAPING THE PLAY

You have learned something about the theory of constructing a photoplay. You have been given some practical work in the formation of its various parts. Now you have come to the time when you must learn to put these parts together and shape the play as a whole.

Different authors have different methods of beginning the building of a photoplay. Some authors think first of a situation which seems to offer much dramatic opportunity. It may have come to them through their own personal experience, or have been told to them by a friend, or it may have been suggested by something reported in a newspaper. Other authors think first of some particular trait of character or the character as a whole. Still others always think first of their theme.

SLOW FORMATION OF PLAY STRUCTURE

An experienced photodramatist will sometimes carry the suggestions for a play pigeon-holed in his brain for weeks, often months, before it takes any definite shape. While writing another play suggestions for this first one will come into his thoughts. These are finally put down in a note-book. Other suggestions are added from time to time. At last the play comes out from its vague shadows and begins to take form.

Good scenarios are never "dashed off" in a night. If the student has entertained any such impression he must at once free himself of it. But he certainly could not have gone through the preceding chapters of this Handbook and kept such a belief. It is true that a "play is not written but rewritten."

A dramatist tells of his experience with his first accepted play. He had worked on it a year. At last he thought it was finished and took it to the producing manager. The play was to be brought out in the fall. The author thought he would go

to the country for the summer and rest. He felt he had earned this privilege. But when he was leaving the manager's office, the latter said:

"Of course you're going to take along a copy of your play and keep working on it through the summer?"

SOUND ADVICE

This after having worked on it for an entire year! But the dramatist followed instructions, and that summer rewrote his whole play. In doing so he found many weak spots that needed strengthening, as well as wrong psychological shadings that needed correcting. Other dramatists have had similar experiences. Fannie Hurst, who wrote "Humoresque" says that she made it a practice to rewrite her first short stories at least twenty times. And Fannie Hurst today is a great psychologist of character. She gives her characters all those fine shadings which make them so true to life.

What is true of a stage play or of a story is equally true of a photodrama. *It is not written but rewritten.* It must be worked over and over. New things must be put in where they are needed, and other things found nonessential must be taken out. The ones who succeed are those who have the patience to work long and diligently. But it is a work well worth while. It brings the broadest kind of education. Then there is an exhilaration in one's own creative effort which nothing else can give. There is, too, the probability of great financial return in the end.

APPLYING TECHNIQUE

When a play—whether suggested by a character, a situation or a theme—begins finally to take shape in one's brain, then the technique of play-building must be brought into use. The day has gone by when picture producers are accepting the crude synopsis of an idea. They want completed screen plays, built with a knowledge of screen technique, just as theatrical managers want completed stage plays, or publishers want written stories or books.

So to begin our work of shaping the play, let us take, for illustration, one suggested by theme. We must first have a

group of characters and a locale. Let us say that the theme is one of duty rising from gratitude. How much shall one rightly demand of another who is indebted to one for favors extended? How much must one give of himself and of his life to repay such indebtedness? The theme deals with conscience. We want a locale for the scenes of our play. Of course this theme might be worked out with the characters in any locale. The theme is universal. But we know that New England has particularly engendered the power of conscience, that the "Yankee conscience" is proverbial. So we select New England as our locale.

Having made such selection, our characters, of course, must be New England types. We have learned in our study of character that individuals are the result of their heredity and environment. And New England character has been greatly influenced by the austere ideals of its Puritan ancestry. It also has inherited strong traits from pioneers who came to a new, untried land, suffered and overcame big obstacles, and laid the corner stone for a great new country. It will be intensely interesting to create a group of characters with such ancestry.

AVOIDING TOO MANY CHARACTERS

We set our thoughts at work. We do not want many characters—not more than three or five who will be the chief actors in our play. We must have characters whose association will offer conflict. That is of first importance. We cannot have drama without conflict. We must have characters, too, who may live a love story. And we must have characters who will lend themselves to contrast. Some of them at least must have a sense of humor. Others must have some eccentric human traits which will give touches of comedy.

Then perhaps some night we shall go to sleep thinking, and awaken in the morning with our brain children born. These new creatures, called out of "the Nowhere into the Here" by our own imagination, seem at once very real to us. They fill us now with new inspiration. We set about the business of giving them names. These must be New England names. We try to avoid those that have been made trite by over use—Si, Hiram, Lucindy, etc. These, too, have been associated with burlesque. And we are not writing burlesque. We are building a drama.

We choose given names that are quite different from each other in sound. We know that if they sound too much alike they will be confusing to the director; if, for instance, we should have a Nan and a Dan, or a Len and a Ben. We know that Bartlett, Harvey and Pierce are old New England family names. So we choose them. We finally write the names selected.

CAST AND LOCALE

Now we have named our characters, we will name the town in which they live. Penfield is a good town name. We visualize our characters and our town. The latter must offer picture values. We decide to make it a seaport town. The ocean is always picturesque. We think of possible vocations for our characters. We want something different. We can make our seaport town a fishing center. It can have a fish-cannery. We know that some "stock" pictures of the fishing industry may be used—the men drawing in their nets filled with the newly caught fish, etc. These stock pictures are taken of different localities, of industries, of big ball games, and are kept for use when it is not possible to get these special scenes for a picture.

We finally write our cast.

Austin Bartlett—a retired sea captain—60 years old.

Janet Bartlett—his daughter—23 years.

John Harvey—struggling young author—30 years.

Mrs. Abbie Pierce—wealthy owner of the fish-cannery—55 years.

Arthur Pierce—her son—28 years, manager of the fish-cannery.

We have here a group of characters whose life interests we may weave together. Both John Harvey and Arthur Pierce may be in love with Janet Bartlett. Janet or her father may be greatly indebted to Mrs. Pierce. That admits the development of our theme and gives us dramatic relations—in fact, a situation. John and Arthur offer both conflict and character contrast. Old Captain Bartlett may be created an individual rather than a type. He also offers comedy possibilities. Janet may be a strong character; so may Mrs. Pierce.

ADDING GROUPS AND MINOR CHARACTERS

Other town characters will be used as needed in the play's development. We shall want some groups—"mobs" they are called in photoplay vernacular. This means any group of people seen in a theatre, or a church, or on the street, or in a cabaret or a garden or at a house party. These assemblages of people give the play atmosphere, movement, entertainment and reality. Touches of comedy may also be given with types in a group.

Groups are used, too, to intensify the drama. The people in the church in "Hail the Woman" are an important part of the drama of David's final confession and acknowledgement of his little son. The groups of townspeople in "The Miracle Man" are a part of the drama. We shall learn more about the value of mob scenes when we come to the development of plot. We know that we shall be able to get some picturesque groups of fisher-folk types in our present seaport town play.

Then we visualize the homes of our characters. We must have two—the simple one belonging to the Bartletts and the rich home of Mrs. Pierce. Here again we have the value of contrast. The home of the old retired sea captain may be very picturesque. The Pierce home will give scenes of richness and beauty. In the big grounds of the Pierce home there may be an attractive old summer house, a group of pine trees, and other quaintly pretty nooks for intimate scenes.

CONSIDERATION OF ECONOMY

There is another thing that we must learn to take into consideration. That is the economy of production. Every "set" that has to be built costs money. Some cost a great deal of money—many thousands of dollars. The "sets" are the interiors of houses. These are all built on the studio stages by the studio carpenters. The furnishings are brought from the studio property-rooms—unless the demand is for something new and different that has to be bought or rented. Production is very expensive. Sometimes a whole street will be built on the studio "lot"—the open air space outside of the stages and other buildings. This is done if the production is of enough worth to warrant the expense. That, of course, is entirely a matter for the judgment of the producer.

The author must take this expense of production into consideration. Both for the strength of his own play—preserving in some degree the unity of place—and to lessen the production cost, he must confine the action of his interior scenes to as few rooms as possible. There is another purpose in doing this. By using a few interiors he associates his characters with their environment. Too many interiors confuse the spectator. If he should take them here, there and everywhere, he would lose the background against which their lives stand out.

LIMITING INTERIOR “SETS”

So we shall play most of the scenes of this photodrama in the two homes mentioned. We may also use the office of the fish-cannery. Some other interior may be found necessary—one of the fisherman’s shacks or some public meeting place. We shall have, of course, a number of exterior scenes.

We shall probably use the big living-room and hall of the Pierce home. We may also use a bedroom. Then there will be the living-room, dining-room and possibly the hall and a bedroom of the Bartlett home.

PUTTING VISUALIZATION INTO PRACTICE

We must visualize every part of these interiors—make them reflect the tastes and the natures of our characters. For an individual always shows much of his own personality in his home. The Bartlett home will reflect the tastes of both the old sea-captain and his daughter, Janet. There would probably be a miniature ship, some nautical pictures and some little odds and ends brought from foreign lands. Janet would have a shelf of books, a picture or two of her own, and perhaps some plants in pots. Her bedroom would be entirely characteristic of herself. She may have a college pennant on the wall. For we may intend to make her a girl of ambitions and education. She may be a pianist or a violinist, educated by the wealthy Mrs. Pierce, and in this way we get the indebtedness which we want for the development of our theme.

The Pierce home should reflect Mrs. Pierce and her son. In thus placing our characters in their homes we have begun the analysis of their individual natures. After we have saturated

ourselves in this atmosphere of their surroundings, we are better able to continue our character portrayals. We have a theme which we are to work out in the lives of this little group of people. We have created the small world in which they live. It must become to us a place of reality. We shut our eyes and visualize these two homes, the grounds about them, the town in which they are, the fish-cannery, the fishing-smacks lying at anchor off the shore, the docks where the fishermen unload their day's haul.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

Now perhaps we know nothing about the fishing business of a seaport town. We *must* know if we are to write a play about it. So we get books and post ourselves on the subject. We must do this with anything else in our play with which we are not entirely familiar. All sorts of absurd and mistaken statements are made in the manuscripts which come into the scenario departments of the various film studios. You want to use some legal technicality in your play, or refer to some law governing a crime or misdemeanor. Much may be dependent upon your manner of doing this. Perhaps the play's whole plot development hinges upon it. If then you should use it incorrectly your whole play would suffer.

There are many other things which come up in your work about which you have no definite knowledge. You must post yourself sufficiently to be right in their use in your scenario. You may, for instance, want to use some incident contingent upon the methods of a Chamber of Commerce, or a Stock Exchange, or upon shipping, mining or manufacturing. You may want to use an incident or a situation contingent upon the building of a bridge, or the building or the breaking of a dam, or upon some use of electricity or dynamite. You may want to use one contingent upon a town, county, state or national election, or upon some medical or scientific principle, or upon some marriage or divorce law.

IMPORTANCE OF DETAILS

If you feel the slightest doubt as to your knowledge on anything which you want to use, post yourself. All this, of course, is detail. But it is detail which makes up life. Mr. Thomas

Edison has criticised our national educational methods; he says that they are impractical. He issued a series of questions which many newspapers published. You may have tried to answer them. He considers a knowledge of the various topics embraced by these questions necessary to one's education. But there is in this country a system of practical education—the writing and production of photodrama. We are certain it would quite satisfy Mr. Edison's demand for the practical.

Suppose you are writing a photoplay on the dramatic possibilities in the bit of Coppée narrative. You must learn all about this class of French entertainers. How do they travel? What are their every day methods of life? You will want to build some of your situations about the quaint gypsy wagons in which they move from town to town.

STARTING PLOT DEVELOPMENT

But to go back to our photoplay in the seaport town. We have our theme, our characters and our locale. We are ready now to begin the plot development.

If the first suggestion for the photoplay has been one of situation instead of theme, we proceed in this same manner. The situation would probably suggest the locale. It might also suggest the characters. The procedure is the same also if a particular type of character has been the first suggestion. The character would demand the necessary setting for his action.

The characters are more or less influenced by their environment. If the play is laid in their own home, they are much influenced. If the scenes of a play are laid in the south, the characters have their own way of speaking and acting and they also have certain ideals which have grown out of their own social customs. The same is true in a general way of the west.

DRAMA AND PICTURE VALUES

Every locale offers its own peculiar picture values. These the author must seek and find. Picture appreciation becomes a sixth sense. There are districts which offer both drama and picture values that have not been much used. The old French district in Louisiana is one of these. The old French Colony can tell many stories. Think of other unused districts. There are many.

Keep in mind the fact that in writing a photodrama you are creating a small world. You must make that world very real to yourself before you can make it real to others.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In building a photoplay what makes first suggestion to you, a theme, a character or a situation?
2. What is meant by "re-writing" a photoplay?
3. What is the meaning of locale, and what values may it give?
4. Of what value are groups or ensembles?
5. Why should you visualize the homes of your characters?
6. What was said about economy of production?
7. Why should you post yourself concerning the detail pertaining to the development of your photodrama?
8. When you write a photodrama what are you creating?

CHAPTER XI

DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTERIZATION

It is best before beginning the work of plot development to become thoroughly acquainted with the characters in your small world. Some authors make an exhaustive analysis of each character. Ibsen said, "I always learn each character down to every fold in his soul." Unless you know your characters you cannot be sure of their future actions. You will not be able to choose the right incidents through which to show their natures and to work out their destinies.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH CHARACTERS

To illustrate, let us analyze the characters in our seaport photoplay.

Austin Bartlett: A New England sea captain. Sixty years old. Widower. Retired and living with his daughter Janet in the old family home in Penfield. Is stockily built, with smooth face and thick shock of white hair. Is a man of health and vigor. Is lovable, with jovial sense of humor, but stubborn. Possesses many of the strong character traits of his New England ancestry, but these inherited characteristics have been modified by the environment of his rough life as a sailor. He has lived in big spaces, with the sea and the sky. He has known other lands and other people. So his New England principles have not settled into ruts of prejudice—which they have done in many of his townspeople who have lived all their lives in the same place. He has acquired a certain brusqueness and dignity in his command of other men on board a freight ship. He has none of the Yankee thrift—no sense of either making or keeping money. Is a child in his careless appreciation of money. Has spent his earnings with prodigality and with little judgment. Under an assumption of gruffness he is quickly sympathetic and credulous; and others have found no difficulty in getting money from him when he happened to have any. So he is now poor. He loves his daughter Janet with all the devotion of his being.

Janet Bartlett: Is twenty-three and possesses the charm of a fine temperament. She has a keener sense of humor than has her father. She sparkles with the joy of living. In her nature the Puritan is always battling with the Pagan. She is constantly blending the practical with the impractical. She is a musician—a violinist—and teaches music in this seaport town. She loves the beautiful. She possesses her father's love for the sea. She chafes under the narrowing limits of her environment and longs for a greater liberty and the associations of the art world. But she is possessed of a New England conscience and a strong sense of duty. She loves her father devotedly and mothers him. She does all the work of their little home beside her work of music teaching. She and her father are good chums. In most cases her judgment is better than his. She has spent much of her life—during her father's sea voyages—with the rich Mrs. Pierce. The latter was the girlhood friend of Janet's mother who has been dead for years. Mrs. Pierce loves Janet like a daughter, and has done much for her. She has paid for Janet's musical training.

John Harvey: This struggling young author is a man of mentality and fine sensibilities. He is rather slight in build, a bit stoop-shouldered, with the head of a scholar and the face of a dreamer, and indulges an occasional winning smile. Is a bit careless in his dress. Is impractical, serious, shy, absent-minded, and lives in a dream world of his own. But he is a thinker and a man destined to some day do big things. He too loves life, but in a different way than does Janet. Hers is the sparkling, joyous love—the free love of a bird in the air. His is a serious love that goes down to the roots of things, to the causes of the various social wrongs. The Bartletts have taken him as a boarder for they need money. And he has come to this seaport town to bury himself so he may write a book.

Janet mothers him as she does her father. He appeals to her sense of humor. But she loves him with all the passion of her temperamental being. And John loves Janet, not only with the passion of a man, but with the passion of the artist for an ideal. Of course they have not confessed their love when the play opens.

Mrs Pierce: Is a thoroughly conventional New England type. She has no particular sense of humor, but is possessed of a strong sense of duty. She belongs to the rich family which has for years owned the fish-cannery and dominated the social interests of this seaport town. She is always conscious of her social power, but is a woman of too fine ancestry to ever be anything of a snob. She is kindly, gives in a conventional way to charities, but is narrow in her view of life. Is not the type of woman who makes many close friends, but is loyal to the ones whom she does make. But she demands as much, or even more, from her friends than she gives. She idolizes her son Arthur who is her one child. She loves him selfishly. Has indulged him always. She would sacrifice any other person's interest to his pleasure. When she discovers that he loves Janet she decides at once that he must have Janet. She never for a moment considers what Janet's feelings in the matter may be. She knows that Janet is greatly in her debt for many kindnesses. She has been both a helpful friend and foster mother to the girl. She expects Janet to repay. She even stoops to subterfuge to help her son in his love affair. She has never been accustomed to opposition in any project upon which she is determined. When she makes the discovery of Janet's love for John Harvey she bitterly resents it.

Arthur Pierce: Is an ultra practical and efficient young business man. He has inherited the business of his forefathers and greatly improved it. He is a shrewd money-maker, but honorable in his dealings. He feels his mother's same consciousness of power in the social position which he holds in the town. He possesses the self-confidence of a man who has never known any sort of defeat. Has been somewhat spoiled—made selfish—by his mother's devotion. He is good looking, carries himself well, and is painstaking in his personal appearance. Wears well tailored clothes. Is thrifty, drives his own car, and never takes any reckless chances. Being himself so practical and possessed of such business efficiency, he feels a natural contempt for John Harvey's type. He has small respect for the work of an author. He loves Janet, and looks upon her as belonging to him by right.

AFTER FIRST ANALYSIS, PLAY BUILDING STARTS

Here we have our character analysis. But this analysis is only description. Our real work of photoplay building must now begin. A play is not a mere description of characters, not merely an account of what they are individually, what relationship they bear to each other and what they are going to do.

This fault is frequently made in the manuscripts which are sent in to us. Many pages will be given to description, then a page or two will be taken up with a brief outline of plot. Remember you are writing a photodrama. It must be as complete a story as one which you would send to a publisher. You do not write the publisher a description of what you would like to have your story tell. Instead you write the story. So you must send the picture producer a fully developed photodrama.

Our characters must be made to do things which shall establish their relationship and bring out their various individual characteristics. *Each must tell himself by his own deeds.* Incidents must be chosen which shall develop their particular drama of life. These incidents must lead to situations, these situations to crises and these crises to a final climax. *And this must all be done pictorially.*

But we shall keep this character analysis close at hand and study it frequently. It gives us the general outline of our characters. We shall learn much more about them, however, as our play grows.

GRADUAL CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Every individual has certain subtle character phases that are brought out only under the stress of certain circumstances. Our present little group have such special traits, and will show them when the time demands. As yet we are not quite certain what these particular subtle phases will be. We shall learn when their time for expression comes. We shall let our characters live their own lives.

And this is a point which we must stop a moment to consider. The author who tries to live the lives of his characters for them is like a parent who tries to dictate every life action of his children. The parent generally makes a mess of things by his constant dictation. He weakens his children by wanting

them to live the life which he dictates, instead of expressing themselves. So an author may weaken his characters. He must study his characters, know every twist and turn in their natures, then direct them along the line of action which they themselves would naturally take.

Let us illustrate with an incident. A woman dramatist was writing a play under contract. Her leading character was a man who had been born and who had lived in the west. He had lived the rough and varied life of a ranchman. He was utterly fearless and had fine strong traits of character. But from his boyhood he had nursed a hatred for a certain man who had done him an injury. The opportunity finally came for him to avenge himself on this man. The method of vengeance which he conceived was brutal. But it was the thing which this particular type of man would naturally have done.

ANALYSIS RATHER THAN DOMINATION

The woman dramatist halted for two weeks at this point in her play. She had struck one of those snags which every writer is bound to strike occasionally. She walked for miles struggling with her problem. She did not know just what was wrong. She grew more and more anxious, for she must have the play finished by a certain date and every minute was precious. Then one day, the truth dawned on her. She discovered that her whole trouble lay in her own attitude toward her character. She was trying to dominate him—live his life for him. Her woman's nature shrank from allowing him to do this thing which he—being the kind of man he was—would naturally do. She went home and finished her play, letting this character follow the impulses of his own nature. She let him be humanly true to himself. The result was a strong characterization. But had she dictated his life's policy she would have had neither characterization nor drama.

Suppose Shakespeare had shrunk from the killing of Duncan. Suppose he had kept Macbeth and his wife from doing this thing which their dominating ambition impelled them to do. The tragedy of Macbeth would not have been written. Shakespeare let his characters live their own lives. He understood them thoroughly and built the sort of plot in which they might find expression.

FROM MOTIVE TO EFFECT

So we must know our characters, then create incidents out of which will evolve a plot in which these characters shall express themselves. We must learn to follow an idea or an impulse from its motive to its effect as a surgeon follows a nerve.

In studying our seaport town group, we know that we have possibilities for drama. We know that we have a group of people who may live both smiles and tears. We know that we have contrast—that element of such great importance.

Through contrasts we gain the lights and shadows in our photoplay, as does an artist in a picture. We gain the comedy and tragedy. We bring out the good and bad, or strong and weak traits in each character. We play the mood of one character against another to bring out certain values of strength or weakness. We use contrast too for other effect—atmosphere, feeling, entertainment, the relief or the tightening of tension.

CONTRAST BREEDS HUMAN DRAMA

Now what opportunities of contrast does our seaport town photoplay offer? Let us again read over our analysis of character. We see that each character has both weak and strong traits. We have neither an all-villainous villain nor an all-heroic hero. They are *human* beings. They are, too, all distinctly different. We shall be able to play them against each other in dramatic contrast. People of like mood and like desires are not apt to clash. It is those of different moods, ideals and desires who clash. Two people of the same mood who act in the same way develop little of dramatic value. There must always be some degree of contrast. Take, for instance, two characters who are angry. If both talk at the same time and shake their fists, neither has given anything distinctive to the scene. One or the other must preserve something of poise. (Of course such incident might be used as comedy.)

John Harvey and Arthur Pierce in our seaport photodrama are characters of decided contrast. We can play one effectively against the other. We can play Janet against them both. We can play Janet against Mrs. Pierce. We can play the latter against her son and John Harvey. We can play old Captain Bartlett against them all.

VALUE OF INCIDENTS

In building our photoplay we shall try to find incidents which will have more than one value. For instance, Janet is a teacher of the violin. We might use an incident in which she gives a lesson. The pupil might be a homely small boy, with freckled face and with one or two of his front teeth out. He is rebellious at being forced to do—to him—so sissy a thing as to take a violin lesson. He scowls defiantly at his fond mother who has brought him and who sits proudly watching him.

The incident may be made to give Janet a big opportunity. It may be used at a time of parallel action. That is, some other important action with John and Arthur or Captain Bartlett or Mrs. Pierce may be taking place somewhere else in the town. It may be near a crisis in the plot. Janet has had some intimation of this other meeting. She is agitatedly anxious as to its outcome. But she tries to keep her thoughts on the music lesson she is giving. Finally, even though she is so distraught and worried, the small rebellious pupil touches her sense of humor. She shrinks sensitively from the discord which he brings from the violin. At last she grows a bit hysterical. She catches the small pupil affectionately in her arms, and they laugh and cry together. The boy feels that she too is in trouble and his gallantry responds. He might hand her his soiled handkerchief with which to wipe the tears from her eyes. The boy and Janet have established a subtlety of understanding which the watching mother has not caught.

SEVERAL CONTRASTS

In this incident we have the value of several contrasts. We have both serious and comic drama. And our comedy has risen out of the conflict of human beings—grown out of a true life happening. We show much of Janet's nature. And at the same time we are moving our plot forward to a crisis.

Another similar incident having several values may be created from the fact of John Harvey's absent-mindedness. Study the character analysis for other possible incidents. An old crony—a quaint seafaring type—might be used with Captain Bartlett to bring out some of the latter's character traits. Think of incidents which shall show Arthur's character. Let these incidents include Janet or other characters of the cast.

Janet, of course, is our character of central interest. Our photoplay is really the development of her life story. From her particular actions must evolve the theme.

Never use two characters where one will do. By centering the interest on a few people, you strengthen both your characters and your photoplay.

Someone has said that a man's character is his message. Ask each character in your photoplay what contributory value his particular message of character brings.

Learn to live with but not for your characters. When one lives for a character he exerts a weakening influence over that character's development.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why should you thoroughly know your characters?
2. How do you go to work to analyze character?
3. How may you injure your characters?
4. What are some of the values of contrast in characterization?
5. What character contrast values does our seaport town photoplay offer?
6. What different values may one incident give?
7. Why should you not use two characters where one will do?
8. What is meant by a man's character being his message?

CHAPTER XII

MOTIVE

Man's actions are the result of his character. Acts are prompted by motive. *Motive is the cause, prompting the commission of an act (as distinguished from action).* And the cause must always *be strong enough to sustain the effect.* Otherwise the effect fails to be convincing. Often it succeeds in being absurd.

Photoplays suffer more from this fault of weak motive than from any other fault. Characters are made to do things with little or no motive. Things *happen* without any cause. This results in confusion and artificiality. Sometimes it results in something weird and fantastic, that has no reason for being. The spectator is bored or moved to ridicule. When characters act without motive, situations are weakened and the climax enfeebled or killed.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

In life every effect has its cause. Emerson said, "Cause and effect, means and end, seed and fruit, cannot be severed; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end pre-exists in the means, the fruit in the seed."

That every effect has its cause is a law of life. So if one is writing drama—reproducing a life experience—he cannot get away from cause and effect. *It is the fundamental law of your photoplay.* Impress this fact upon your mind. Every happening must have its cause. And motive is the mainspring of human action.

Every act of your characters should be impelled by some reasonable motive—one which shall have the stamp of probability. It must, too, be in conformity with the character's own nature. Different characters are impelled by different motives. For the motives of an individual are influenced by the strength or weakness of his ideals. They are also influenced by the strength or weakness of his will power.

It has been said that motive tells the whole life history of an individual. It tells what he has made of his life, what he stands for, what his thoughts and conduct have developed within him; in fact, *what he is*.

DEFINITE EXAMPLES OF MOTIVE

In "Hail the Woman" Judith is impelled by motives very different from those which prompt her father. Her social ideals are higher than his. His ideals have hardened into selfish prejudices. David's ideals are dominated by a weak will. This fact influences his motives and his action.

In our photoplay built from the Coppée narrative, the clown's motives would differ from those of the ring-master. In our seaport town photoplay, John Harvey would be prompted by motives different from those which would influence the actions of Arthur Pierce. So the motives of Mrs. Pierce would differ from those of Janet.

In your study of motive go down into the lives of your characters and analyze their individual natures. What would cause the actions of one man to differ from the actions of another? Let us take John Harvey and Arthur Pierce.

John—the student and writer—is led by his thought life. Arthur is led by his impulses. Arthur has been brought up and pampered by an injudicious mother. He has been made of such great importance that he is now tensely personal. He feels that the world exists for his individual pleasure. His sense of social responsibility is weak. He is not apt to consider the rights of others. His love for Janet would be selfish.

John, in his study of life, has gone down to its deeper meanings. He is more impersonal than Arthur. He has a stronger sense of social responsibility. He thinks less of his individual rights, and recognizes the broader human rights. His love for Janet would be less selfish.

ANALYZING MOTIVE

Which of these two men would be impelled by the motive of sacrifice? Which would be the quicker to protect Janet in a situation of stress? Which would show the greatest courage?

Would not Arthur be apt to show both physical and moral cowardice in a crisis? Would not his actions be always first influenced by the motive of self-interest?

In this sort of analysis we learn what incidents to choose to develop our characters and evolve situations.

The motive—the cause—must always be strong enough to sustain the effect. The theme motive and the motive behind all action must have this strength. Weak motive makes unreal characters.

Closely related to the element of motive is that of probability. The acts and deeds of your characters must be probable ones. In the frantic attempt to put novelty into a photoplay often the motive is entirely overlooked. The characters are made to do the most improbable things in order to bring about some strained, sensational situation. The result, of course, is always absurd. The effort usually meets with ridicule.

On meeting a stranger in real life it is necessary, before you feel any lively interest in him, that you have something more than a formal introduction. If, for instance, you should see him pick up a lost child in the street and comfort it, you would like him at once. If you should see him snatch the child from the harm of an oncoming automobile, your liking would grow to admiration. Afterwards you would always think of this man as one of courage. And knowing him better you might forgive other character traits not so admirable.

CHARACTERISTICS REVEALED BY ACTIONS

So in your photoplay you must make your characters liked or disliked early in the play's development by something that they do. You must have one liked and another doubted, if not entirely disliked, from the beginning. It is by creating this contrast of feeling—this sympathy for one character and dislike for another—that you strengthen your situations, crises and climax. Turn back and read what has already been written about the photoplay entitled "The Man from Lost River." Read what was written about the first situation of the play created from the Coppée narrative.

First impressions are hard to overcome. It is difficult to win sympathy for a character who has made a bad first impression. A very well known actor says, "I will not play a part in which I spend four reels making my audience hate me and then try to redeem myself in their eyes in the last reel."

INFLUENCE OF ONE SCENE

In "Way Down East" Mr. Griffith makes the spectator like Anna Moore early in the play. She is seen with her little, sick, illegitimate baby. The realization comes to her that the baby is dying. A great terror seizes her as she knows that it will die without baptism. Her responsibility of mother love is tragic and gripping in its pathos. In her extremity of need she herself baptizes her baby. Her motive is impelled by certain ideals, certain teachings of faith. In this act she rises to her own character heights. She is so tensely true to her own ideals that she commands respect and deep sympathy.

This scene is the one of great strength in the whole play. By giving dignity to the character of Anna Moore, it enhances the interest in all of her future action. Indeed, all the rest of the play gains its values from this scene with the baby. The two reels of floating ice in the Connecticut River—when David rescues Anna from drowning—are dependent upon this early scene. It is because the spectator has learned to care so much for Anna that he watches her rescue with such tense interest. If Anna had neglected her baby, or shown no responsibility of mother love, the scenes of this rescue would have lost most of their power.

It is necessary, therefore, to make certain characters much liked from the beginning. They may show their human weaknesses later. But at first they must show something of strength. Create incidents which shall accomplish this.

Think of some incident which will cause Janet Bartlett to be liked early in the play. Think of something which shall accomplish this same thing for old Captain Bartlett and John Harvey. One incident which would include the three might bring about this desired result. Think of some incident which shall show one of the weaknesses in the character of Mrs. Pierce

before you show any of her good points. Do the same with Arthur Pierce. This first impression is bound to linger. Gain these different contrast values in all of your little character groups.

IMPORTANCE OF ORIGINALITY

Again we urge the necessity of new incidents—ones different from those which have become hackneyed by constant use. Put both your imagination and your observation to work.

An English author writing of American photoplays makes a number of excellent criticisms. He tells of the bad manners of so many of our characters—of their ignorance of good social usage, of how they stand and how they act at different social functions. Much of this, of course, is the director's fault. But much too is the fault of the author. He states that England has gained the impression that the one occupation of the American business man is to sit at a desk and chew the end of a cigar.

Think of something different for your business men characters to do. They really lead lives of strenuous and diverse action. Do not always anchor them to desks. A man, in his office, does many different things each day which reveal character. Go back frequently to the analysis which you first made of your characters. Add notes as your acquaintance with your characters grows. Use incidents which shall show all sides of your characters. Your bits of dialogue should be written in the style of speech which the characters would use.

A MASTER CRAFTSMAN'S ADVICE

Concerning this manner of working, Ibsen says:

"When I am writing I must be alone. If I have eight characters of a drama to do with, I have society enough. They keep me busy. I must learn to know them."

And this process of making their acquaintance on manuscript offers suggestions to the continuity writer.

Ask yourself: "Are the characters of my photoplay real? Are they human? Is their action true? Are their motives strong enough to sustain the effects? Have I reached any new depths of strength or beauty in human nature?"

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is cause and effect, and what does it mean to photodrama?
2. What does weak motive do to photodrama plot?
3. What influences a character's motive?
4. Analyze the motives of two contrasting characters.
5. What has probability to do with motive?
6. Why should you make your characters liked or disliked early in the development of your plot?
7. Create three incidents in a business office which you have never seen used on the screen.
8. How may you become acquainted with your characters?

CHAPTER XIII

PLOT DEVELOPMENT

How shall the photoplay begin? This is always something of a problem. But it is one which each writer must solve for himself. No absolute rule can be given. Different photoplays must begin differently. A few general suggestions may be made, however.

You have selected your material. You have made your first cast of characters. You have analyzed these characters and made their acquaintance. *Now your plot must grow out of the lives and the actions of this little group of people—out of their particular conflict in their lives.*

THE "OLD CLOTHES MEN"

You cannot find a plot somewhere else and tack it onto these characters—not and have it a convincing work of truth and of art. That attempt is sometimes made by hack-writers, by the "old clothes" men and women of the profession. But you are studying to be a real photodramatist—a *creator*. So you will direct the life conflict of your characters into the building of their own plot. It is much easier for an author to write a plot, if he knows how, than it is to adapt one. *And you are going to know how.*

You have been instructed in the method of gathering material and in the manner of developing and adjusting the various parts and values of your photoplay. If you have followed this instruction faithfully, if you have practiced the work suggested, you should now be able to develop your plot.

THE BEGINNING

The beginning of your photoplay may be quiet or it may be tense. That depends upon the character of your theme and plot, and upon the sort of psychology you want first to suggest. It depends, too, upon the sort of contrast you wish to make. For

plot development, like character development, must have its values of contrast. But you should begin at a point which will arouse interest and induce some degree of suspense. You yourself must be the judge of how you can best obtain these results.

You know that your characters must first be introduced. Their relationship to each other must be established. You know that this must be accomplished through the use of pictorial incident. You have been told that such incidents should lead into a situation. Do not waste time and film footage in unnecessary detail. "The elimination of the inconsequential" is a rule of dramatic technique. A photoplay may have just about so many feet of film. Every inch of this should be made of value in the play's development.

If you decide on an intimate scene for your opening one, it is best to use an interior for its action. Intimate scenes require more seclusion for their development. An intimate scene is one of special or more subtle dramatic revealment. If played out of doors, it is subject to endangering distracting interests—as the flight of a bird, the blowing of the wind through the branches of a tree. The interior also exerts a certain intimate psychology. So these scenes are played somewhere indoors. The scene played at the foot of the stairs in "Hail the Woman," when the father repudiates Judith and turns her out of his home, is an intimate scene. You can understand that it would be weakened if played outside on the porch, or in the yard, or on the street. Watch the screen for the intimate scenes. But if you want to gain local atmosphere, or if you want the psychology of movement, you may begin your photoplay out-of-doors.

AVOIDING THE PROLOGUE

Prologues are old fashioned. They are, however, sometimes permissible—if the photoplay's story is one of enough strength to warrant such use. But the student is advised to choose material which will not necessitate the use of the prologue.

UNITY OF TIME

Strive always for photoplay material which will lend itself to short time lapses—which will, in some degree, preserve the unity of time. Long time lapses—covering, perhaps, a period

of years—are cumbersome. Years make so many changes in individuals. Children grow up. The treatment of such photoplay material meets with many difficulties.

RETROACTIONS

Retroactions also are cumbersome. A retroaction or retrospect is a going back to explain a thing which happened to one or more of the characters months or years before. It may have been only hours. The customary method of using a retroaction is to have some one of the characters tell the story.

This sort of technique seemed a necessary part of the adaptation of stories for screen use. But now that the screen has developed, like the stage, its own art of play building, this cumbersome earlier technique is dropping into disuse. Select material which will allow of progressive plot development, without the necessity of having to go back to explain. Prologues are more desirable than retroactions. But the photoplays of the best technique have neither. If you find some explanation of a former happening necessary, make use of a device like a letter or a picture or a suggestive incident. Or just a short title may do it. Of course pictures and letters have been greatly overworked. Try to create new devices. You can do this if you will take the time to think.

CLEARNESS OF UNDERSTANDING

The older technique of retroaction was, of course, employed to bring to the plot development more clearness of understanding. Clearness is another and absolute law of dramatic technique. Your photoplay must be entirely understandable from beginning to end.

To gain the strength of clearness, the writer must use the element of preparation. He must prepare for the thing which is going to happen—must induce expectation of its occurrence. Otherwise when the happening occurs it is obscure, not understandable.

PREPARATION

You sometimes hear people around you in a moving-picture theater ask, in a puzzled way, "How did he happen to get there?" or "What is she doing that for?" or "What does that mean?"

The good photodramatist never allows a question of this sort to be asked in this way. He establishes the character at a certain place and at a certain time. He prepares for the certain thing that is to be done. He knows that obscurity kills the strength of his situations, crises and climax. The good director also knows this, and strives for clearness.

During the progress of an event there is no time to explain its nature. There is, for instance, a shipwreck, or a fire or explosion. Preparation must have been made for this event. Otherwise its suspense and other dramatic values are weakened or entirely lost. The spectator wonders vaguely what it is all about—why the accident, how it happened to occur, and for what purpose.

Some one character is to be shot. The event is made more understandable and suspense is developed by preparation. A revolver is discovered in a drawer or on a table or in any other probable place. Or a gun is seen on the wall or in a corner. Of course such discovery may be ridiculous if it is made obvious. It must be done with adroit or entertaining suggestion.

“THE CUP OF LIFE”

“The Cup of Life,” a Hobart Bosworth photoplay, produced by Thomas Ince and directed by Rowland Lee, is an example of excellent preparation. Its situations, crises and climax are all dependent upon a pearl of unusual size and beauty. The first scenes show a ship load of pearl poachers. The pearl is found by one of the sailors when he opens a shell. He tries to hide it in his mouth. But the captain of the ship notes the sailor’s actions, seizes and chokes him and secures the pearl. Other succeeding incidents emphasize the beauty and great value of this pearl. Such emphasis of preparation furnishes strong cause in the plot’s development, and makes all of the later dramatic happenings thoroughly understandable.

“TOL’ABLE DAVID”

In the Richard Barthelmess production of “Tol’able David,” written by Joseph Hergesheimer and directed by Henry King, there is much effective preparation. The characters are a group of the simple, clannish folk who live isolated lives in the moun-

tain districts of West Virginia. The early scenes emphasize the deep tribal devotion of the different members of David's family one for the other. They emphasize, too, the family's simple tribal standards of right and wrong, and the stern duty and family loyalty that avenges its family's injuries—grown out of the constant study of and simple faith in the old testament stories. All of which is effective preparation for the strong dramatic conflict which follows.

The early scenes, too, win much liking for David's dog—an intelligent collie. This liking prepares us for the revulsion of feeling which comes when the dog is so cruelly killed by the degenerate member of another family. All of the tribal sense of retaliation is stirred, not alone in David's brother, but in every spectator who views the scenes. For these tribal inheritances are in us all. This incident of the killing of the dog is the first cause of the photoplay's subsequent dramatic action.

If legal papers of particular import are to be used, preparation must emphasize their importance. This is done in the George Arliss production of "Disraeli." Watch for this dramatic device in other photoplays. Note if the preparation has been made sufficiently emphatic. If a character is to take up a new line of work or any different interest, preparation must be made for such change. Otherwise the change, not being understood, will carry little or nothing of dramatic value. "Planted" is the photoplay vernacular for preparation. A happening must be "planted" sometime before its occurrence.

AROUSING EXPECTANCY

Preparation which arouses expectancy stirs varying degrees of suspense. It also stirs feeling and impels motive. In "Hail the Woman" an effective bit of preparation is made by the baby's little shoeless feet showing through ragged stockings. They stir motive in Nan, and prepare for the tragic self-sacrifice which she makes that she may buy shoes for her baby. Just to have had her see the shoes in the shop-keeper's window would not have been sufficient preparation. The spectator must learn that the baby needs shoes, needs them badly. And it is winter—Christmas time.

An old rule of dramatic technique demands that a thing of particular import to plot development must be emphasized by at least three preparatory mentionings of incidents. The three are not arbitrary. It may be given more than three incidents, or one may be sufficient to establish its importance. But it must be established by some manner of preparation.

COINCIDENCE TO BE SHUNNED

Coincidence is one of the worst and most frequent offenses in plot development. It is used with no sort of logical preparation. Things happen conveniently at the most opportune time, with no reason whatever for so doing. Characters, through coincidence, make the most impossible discoveries; they meet under the most surprising and improbable conditions; they conveniently overhear conversations; they die or get killed at a time in the plot's development when it is more expedient to have them out of the way, or, having suffered from loss of memory, they are miraculously restored at just the right moment to denounce some one's villainy.

Of course there are coincidences in life. And they may be occasionally used in a photoplay. But their use must be most adroitly handled, with the most careful preparation. It takes experience, however, to do this. It is best for the beginner to choose other methods of plot development.

MYSTERY SUBJECTS DIFFICULT

We must here advise the student to let deep mystery plots alone until he has had more experience. Many of these, involving the adventures of a detective, are sent in to our manuscript department. Plots of this type, to be convincing, require the adroit handling of a practiced writer. Choose simpler material. Learn to do the human things.

You have decided how to begin your photoplay. You are ready now to write. Use short sentences. Learn to tell much in few words. It is best also to use the present tense. You may give a brief description of each character when introduced. You need not give your whole analysis. That is your own working chart. You are to make your character tell of himself in his deeds.

ATMOSPHERE

Describe your locale, your character's environment. Make this description terse, without the use of unnecessary words. Tell of any features of particular importance in the environment—things which show the individual traits of your characters, or which are to be used in your plot's development. By this is meant the type of home, or room, or office, or grounds. The sort of automobile or other vehicle in which he rides. Or he may be riding a horse. Or he may be in a boat or on board ship. He may be near some picturesque rock, or in the mountains, or in a field or a country lane, or on a crowded city street. Wherever he is, tell the salient points of his environment. *Impress its atmosphere.*

FINISH AND REALITY

One great reason why producers have bought so many published stories was that these completely written stories had atmosphere. They were more real than were the original photoplays of bare skeleton synopses. Their characterizations were developed. The new photoplay technique uses all of the same values of finish and reality that are used in a story, but uses them in a different way. The descriptions are shorter. They must be manipulated, too, in a way which shall not interfere with the photoplay's movement and delay or confuse its action.

If you were writing a photoplay made from the Coppée narrative, you would describe the tent, its lights, the platform outside, the dressing rooms, and the wagons in which these strolling performers traveled. You have read and posted yourself in all of its detail. You have soaked yourself in its atmosphere. You have visualized it, put into it all of the picture values which your understanding and your imagination could paint. Now you must make this small world just as real to the producer and director as it is to you.

CORRELATING THE PLOT MOVEMENT

Tell the action of your characters in your various incidents. Reveal their psychology. Build incident upon incident progressively, just as they should move on the screen. Build your situations to crises, to climax and ending. *Build a completed photoplay.* One of the studio's staff writers, who knows the camera

and the mechanics, will later put it into continuity—make the working manuscripts. With this new photoplay technique, the work of the continuity writer is very much lessened.

Do not think that you are going to write your photoplays smoothly and continuously. They are not done that way. You will meet with many obstacles. You will strike the proverbial snag. Every writer does this, even those of most experience. So do not be discouraged. Stop and think the thing out. You may discover that you have not made sufficient preparation or the right kind of preparation for a situation. You may discover that your fundamental cause is not strong enough to sustain the effect. You may need some other element, or interest, or incident, or character. Study until you discover the weak spot and its cause. Then go back and strengthen this weak spot and rebuild. It is the only way.

If you have this tenacity of purpose; if you have this patience to try over and over again until you are right; if you do your work with the joy of a creator, then there is every probability of your ultimate success.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Out of what must the plot of your photodrama grow?
2. What influences the different beginnings of photodrama?
3. In what type of locale are the intimate scenes most effective?
4. What is a prologue and a retroaction, and why are they undesirable technique?
5. What is meant by preparation and what is its plot value?
6. What is coincidence, and how is its use distorted?
7. What is meant by "atmosphere"?
8. How is photodrama written?

CHAPTER XIV

PLOT DEVELOPMENT—(Continued)

In the last chapter it was stated that the plot, as well as characterization, must have contrast value. Nothing is more deadly to man's existence than monotony. Life demands the constant stimulus of contrast. The same is true in art. It is particularly true in drama.

The contrast values of plot in photodrama are gained in different ways: with interior and exterior locales, with day and night scenes, with serious and comic situations, with parallel action, effects, movement and ensembles—"mobs."

CONTRAST OF LOCALES

The interior and exterior locales may be made to give much of contrast in atmosphere, picturesqueness and dramatic suggestion. Rich and poor, small and large, quaint and artistic, conventional and unconventional interiors may be used. Odd nooks and corners may be made to contrast the conventional. We have gained this value of contrast in the home of old Captain Bartlett in our seaport town photoplay. All of his seafaring mementoes give picturesque contrast to a conventional New England living-room. In "Hail the Woman," the staircase in the living-room modifies the conventional, and gives opportunity for effective groupings for one of the most dramatic scenes in the photoplay.

When the interior of a poor home is used, it is always well to devise something of artistic suggestion—a picture, a candle, a different kind of window or door, or a unique bit of furniture. A picture on the wall is always some expression of the ideal. A crude print of the Madonna will give a touch of beauty to the most desolate abode.

PICTURE VALUES

The director may or may not change your suggestions. But even if he should, you have had their visualized value in the

development of your photoplay. You are writing *picture-drama*; and you must make your locales co-ordinate with the dramatic meaning of your play's story. You yourself must gain the feeling in your pictures, as a musical composer gains the feeling in the harmony of his notes, or an artist in the harmony of his design.

All sorts of picturesque contrasts may, of course, be obtained with exterior locales—mountains, seas, rivers, fields, valleys, shaded country roads, rocky coasts, hills, deserts, lanes, streets, alleys and parks. When one acquires the picture sense he is always on the lookout for effective locales, both interior and exterior.

DAY AND NIGHT SCENES

Day and night scenes have numerous contrast values. They exert different psychology. They bring different dramatic suggestions in feeling and action. Daytime influences with more of reality than does night. Certain incidents and situations are heightened with more of mystery and suspense if their action takes place at night. Night adds to dread in all cases of danger.

Men are calmer in the daytime, more possessed of themselves. Their passions of love, hate and fear run with more of tension, or expend themselves with a more reckless abandonment at night. The father in "Hail the Woman" would not have been so apt to have turned Judith out of doors had the situation occurred in the morning, or at any time during the day.

The characters in our photoplay made from the Coppée narrative would be quite different in their daytime and nighttime moods. It would be good practice for the students to analyze this difference in moods. You have visualized these strolling performers as they appeared at night, during the time of their preparation for their show. You may have visualized them during the action of their show. How do you think these persons of primitive impulses might appear the next day? Note the difference of mood of different individuals during the daytime and in the evening.

Day and night scenes also give contrasts in lighting—sun, moon, candle, fire and electric light effects. Dark scenes are effective in certain plot developments. So are shadows cast by sunlight.

Day and night scenes offer, too, a difference in costuming—day gowns and evening gowns. Costume always brings somewhat of entertainment as well as picture and character values to the photoplay. The spectator enjoys quaint or artistic costumes or beautiful evening gowns.

CONTRAST OF THE SERIOUS AND COMIC

The contrast of serious and comic situations has about the same values in the development of plot that it has in characterization development. But they differ somewhat in nature and their effect must be different. The comic situation is incongruous, fantastic or grotesque. It is used as contrast to relieve the tension of the serious. But its effect must be only momentary. It must never divert one long from the scene's serious action. For if too long a diversion is allowed, the story is weakened. This fault is sometimes made in the cutting of a picture. Some bit of comedy relief will be given too much footage. There is always the psychological moment of fine shading. If the comedy relief is prolonged beyond this moment it proves disastrous to the play's serious purpose. And the comic situation must never burlesque the serious—not unless the photoplay is wholly one of burlesque.

PARALLEL ACTION

Parallel action, when skilfully used, may give strong contrast values. It is the photoplay's device known as the "cut-back"—the instantaneous shifting from one scene of action to another scene of action. It moves the story's different interests in the plot's development. It intensifies the suspense.

The first dressing-room scenes of our photoplay made from the Coppée narratives are ones of parallel action. In their movement we introduce our characters, show their relationship to each other, contrast their different natures, and develop a situation. The music lesson incident suggested for our seaport town photoplay would be one of parallel action. It could intensify the suspense.

The Christmas eve episode in "Hail the Woman" is one of parallel action. The contrast is made between Nan's tragic situation and the superficial calm of David's home. While Nan, ill, bewildered and desperate, is sacrificing herself to buy shoes for her baby, David sits by his home fire trying to read his Bible. And the suspense is increased by chance incidents which are bringing Judith to the discovery of Nan and the baby.

A wonderfully effective bit of parallel action is used in "Tol'able David." All his life David has been ambitious to drive the hack and carry the mail from his isolated mountain town to the distant railroad station. A series of tragic happenings finally give him the opportunity for which he has always longed.

One of these happenings had made him weaken before the tribal moral standards of his particular social group. He had let his mother persuade him against avenging the killing of his dog, the injury to his brother, and its fatal effect upon his father. All of his inheritances of family loyalty make him feel himself a coward.

Then comes the opportunity to redeem himself. When he is returning from the railroad station, the mail-sack is stolen from the hack. The degenerate who killed David's dog and injured his brother, is the thief. David follows this half-witted brute to a cabin and tries to secure his mail-bag. He is a pigmy of physical strength beside this other. A vicious fight ensues. It is really a fight of spirit against animal bulk.

During the fierce action of this fight, David's mother sits calmly waiting on the porch of the store which is also the post-office. Her whole being radiates mother love and pride. Her boy has finally achieved his lifelong ambition to drive the hack and carry the mail. She is waiting to witness his triumphant return. In her heart she knows that she weakened David in his own self-appreciation when she influenced him against carrying out his tribal code of loyalty and duty. She knows that his triumph now will have some degree of self-reassertion. She wants to share it. She talks proudly about David to the store-keepers and the various townsfolk who come for their mail. David is late. But his mother's faith in him never weakens. The contrast between this quiet, human mother scene and the one which David is enacting induces a gripping tension of suspense.

"EFFECTS" IN PICTURES

"Effects" give contrast values. An effect, used in this sense, is a method or device for producing a distinctive impression, feeling or entertainment. All sorts of storms are effects—a rain, wind, snow or sand storm. They give contrast and enhance dramatic feeling. A sunrise or sunset is an effect. Double exposures are often effects. The double exposure of Nan's spirit form at the ending of "Hail the Woman" is an effect. The use of Father Time or the character of Death are effects. The use of vision—a visible expression of memory is an effect.

Vision is an effect which may give a bit of comedy contrast. In "The Little Minister," when Gavin, reading the book of Ruth in his Bible, sees a vision of Babbie's face on the page, it gives a pretty touch of sentimental comedy. Try to create new vision devices for comedy and other dramatic contrasts.

MOVEMENT

Movement is one of the most effective methods of contrast. But the student must not confound movement with action. Action is the outward expression of the inner drama. Movement is motion. It can, however, be made dramatic motion. That depends upon how and where it is used. And it can be a most effective spectacle. But movement without being put to these special uses remains only motion.

One person, or two, or a group on horseback, or soldiers marching or any type of parade gives movement. Dancing, swimming and physical games give movement. One or more characters walking gives movement. So does an automobile or train of cars, or a flying-machine or a ship or any kind of boat. Animals give movement—a herd of cows or sheep, or a dog, or birds.

Movement should always be utilized in some way with the plot's development. It should have some relation of purpose. It is a quite necessary value. It is used to tighten or lessen the dramatic tension. Riders on horseback, or in an automobile or carriage, or on a boat may be bringing or carrying some message of some relief of vital dramatic importance. Soldiers may be on the way to a rescue. In lessening the tension, movement may

have the same use as the intermission between the acts of the stage play. The spectator needs moments of respite from tension between strong situations. It gives him a chance to get a more thoughtful grip on the photoplay's story. The use of animals as movement may be a part of the play's atmosphere.

But too much movement may destroy all of its contrast values. It may halt the plot development. It may, in fact, destroy the whole photoplay. Overmuch movement may "give the play the St. Vitus dance," as one writer has put it.

ENSEMBLES

Ensembles supply movement and contrast: numbers of townsfolk, crowds of workers, or any groups of associates. They give social background. They reflect, emphasize or participate in the drama action. They are expressive of the spirit of tribal relationship. No dramatic event ever affects one person alone. Its influence always touches other lives, sometimes many lives. In "Hail the Woman" all of David's townsfolk are affected by his sin of deceit through his weakness of will. His confession gains much strength in being made to his whole social group assembled in the church. They reflect, emphasize and participate in the drama action.

The assembled groups of townsfolk in "The Miracle Man" have this same relationship to the plot development. So has the big audience of East Side Jews in "Humoresque." They reflect, emphasize and participate in the triumph of the "wonder child" who has now become a great violinist. He is one of them. He shares with them the same racial inheritances of ideals, the same tribal drama.

Sometimes this participation of the crowd is made big drama—as in the Lubitsch production of "Passion"—built around the French Revolution. These are literally mob scenes. It is pictured history. Every man, woman and child in the mob is inflamed with the passion of generations of injustice. It is drama in mass.

Study carefully the ensembles in the writing of your photoplay. Use them in the plot development where they shall bring most of value. For they may bring big values.

TIME AND EXPERIENCE

All of this complex work of plot development is not learned at once. It takes time and experience to gain a thorough knowledge of its many phases. But it is all a vital part of the study of dramatic technique. Have patience, and try to learn one thing at a time.

CLIMAX AND ENDING

Now a last word about climax and ending.

You have learned what climax is. You know its place and its dramatic use in your photoplay. You know that it is the most intense crisis of which any given plot is capable. In your climax you have taken your characters to their dramatic heights. Now you must make your central character do something of human worth on those heights—something of human service. Never write a negative climax. Always make your climax positive, if you want your photoplay to be a success.

Let us explain. A photoplay was once produced with an ambitious young lawyer as the hero. He had fought against big odds to study law and realize his ambition. The sympathy of the spectator was with him in his fight. It was expected that a man of his caliber would do something of social worth. But all of his opportunity for heroic service was frustrated by a negative climax.

In his capacity of district attorney he showed courage in defending a man whom he believed to be innocent. The man was innocent. But the district attorney's attitude stirred resentment in some of his prejudiced townsfolk. A mob gathered for the purpose of tarring and feathering the hero. The infuriated mob made good pictures, moving under the light of torches. But the climax of plot values was all lost in an excess—a debauch—of mob movement.

DISAPPOINTING RESULTS

The hero did nothing of social service. He himself was just a victim of the mob's violence. His clothes were torn from his body, and his whole fight was to save his own life. His dramatic conflict, followed through the plot's situations and crises, realized

nothing. The hysterical mob did nothing of social service. The plot fell to pieces in a negative climax, induced by an excess of mob movement. The result was one of disappointment.

If the young lawyer had fought and rescued some other character from the mob's fury, or if his power of spirit had dominated the mob's violence, then the climax might have been made a positive one.

Beware of the negative climax. The spectator's interest has followed the action of your hero with the expectation that he will do something worth while. The life of your photoplay depends upon their not being disappointed. But he must do this thing of worth modestly, without bombastic self-consciousness. Gerald Stanley Lee says that the real hero does not want to be imprisoned in his own glory, or just cooped up into being a hero. He is more conscious of others than of himself.

IMPORTANCE OF ENDING

Do not slight the ending of your photoplay. Do not rush your lovers into one another's arms. The ending is important. It is the last impression. It should not be prolonged, neither should it dwindle away. Make it emphatic. Let it carry some thought of the theme, or some pleasant last impression of a character.

But drama, like life, really has no end. What seems an end is always a beginning. Life sweeps forever onward. As a student of drama you must watch this constant life movement as a vast living picture. Then you must reproduce it in a way that shall reveal the human heart to itself.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the effects of monotony upon life and upon photodrama?
2. What are some of the contrast values of interior and exterior locales?
3. Why does the psychology of mood differ with day and night time?

4. What is the difference between comedy situation and comedy in characterization?
5. What is an effect, and what is a vision?
6. What are the contrast values of movement, and how may too much movement prove an injury to plot?
7. What is the difference between a negative and positive climax?
8. How should your photodrama end?

SPARE-TIME STUDY

Tell me how a young man uses his little ragged edges of time after his day's work is done, during his long winter evenings, what he is revolving in his mind at every opportunity, and I will tell you what that young man's future will be.

A person might as well say that there is no use in trying to save anything from his small salary or income, because the amount would never make him rich, so he might as well spend it as he goes along, as to say he never can get a liberal education by studying during his spare time. But did you ever think that scores of people have given themselves the equivalent of a college education in their spare moments and long winter evenings?

—ORISON SWETT MARDEN.

SYMPATHY, IMAGINATION, KNOWLEDGE

Sympathy and imagination are twin sisters. Your heart must go out to all men, the high, the low, the rich, the poor, the learned, the unlearned, the good, the bad, the wise, the foolish—you must be one with them all, else you can never comprehend them. Sympathy! It is the touchstone to every great secret, the key to all knowledge, the open sesame of all hearts. Put yourself in the other man's place, and then you will know why he thinks certain thoughts and does certain deeds.

But Knowledge must go with Sympathy, else the emotions will become maudlin and pity may be wasted on a poodle instead of a child; on a field-mouse instead of a human soul. Knowledge in use is wisdom, and wisdom implies a sense of values—you know a big thing from a little one, a valuable fact from a trivial one. Tragedy and comedy are simply questions of value; a little misfit in life makes us laugh, a great one is a tragedy and cause for grief.

—ELBERT HUBBARD.

CONCLUSION

“The secret of success is constancy to purpose.” That truth you have already learned in your own life’s experience. One must stick to his purpose if he wants to succeed, but one’s purpose should offer enough of reward to pay for one’s perseverance and effort. This is true of scenario writing; it offers rich rewards to those who have enough constancy of purpose to master it.

You go to a technical school if you want to take up vocational work:—electrical or civil engineering, agriculture, home economics, etc. You go to a business college if you want to make yourself an expert bookkeeper, stenographer or typist. You go to a law school if you want to become a lawyer, or a medical school if you want to become a physician.

In fitting yourself for any vocation or profession, you are preparing yourself to get the most out of life. You want to become a trained specialist to command the respect for your undertaking and the best possible reward for your labor. You do not want to be an unskilled hack or quack, having to exist on any poorly paid “job” that you are lucky enough to get. To be an expert in any line of work one must learn the best methods of doing that work. This is true of scenario writing just as it is true of electrical engineering, the law, or domestic science. To meet with success one must learn photodramatic construction. There have been instances of amateur writers selling scenarios without having had any previous training whatsoever. These have been accidents. Seldom has one of these persons sold a second manuscript, in spite of every effort to do so. There have been some, who have held positions on studio scenario staffs for a brief period without having had any training in photodramatic construction. “Pull” has been responsible for most of such opportunities—but pull has been unavailing in helping such temporarily fortunate persons to survive the real test. To succeed one positively must have the necessary training.

You have just finished reading and mentally absorbing the fourteen chapters which contain the fundamentals of screen

technique. You have been told what the elements—the various parts of a photoplay—are. You have been told how to put these parts together and shape a screen play as a whole. You have been given a brief but comprehensive view of photodramatic *theory* with suggestions as to how to put that theory into *practice*.

You have taken only the first step. This volume is the primer—a very important part of the course of study upon which you are entering—but *only* a part and only the first step. Many impatient students are inclined to stop here and, disregarding the remainder of the Course and Service, immediately attempt the construction of a photodrama. *Do not do this.* When you have finished reading this concluding chapter, turn at once to the Plan of Study and follow every instruction and suggestion therein contained. You must proceed henceforth with confidence in yourself, confidence in the Palmer organization to assist you to a successful termination of your efforts, and confidence in the motion picture as an art form, together with a full appreciation of the market that awaits the product of your efforts.

The Palmer Course and Service offers the greatest opportunity for learning photoplay construction. It offers instruction from the best equipped teachers, who are trained in practice as well as in theory. These teachers have been in close touch with photoplay development. They have, in fact, helped to evolve its technique. They are men and women of scholarship and a broad understanding of life. To be under their instruction is a liberal education.

And the Palmer Course and Service is *practicable*. This is one of its outstanding values. You do not have to leave home to follow its study course. You do not have to give up any other work. You can find some time each day for study and practice. While you are pursuing other lines of work, you are developing a knowledge and craftsmanship which may bring you the greatest of life success.

The demand is great for good photodramas, written with a knowledge of screen technique. Mr. Samuel Goldwyn, of the Goldwyn Corporation, says:

“One of these days we shall have screen classics, just as we have classics of the printed word. But these picture classics will not come from an aloof and indifferent class of writers, but from

the ones who are willing to *learn how* to do the work. What is wanted most of all are photoplays that deal with home life—the things that happen to everyday Americans, and which we all instantly and gladly recognize as real.”

Mr. Thomas Ince says:

“The tendency of my studios is towards the production of original stories with big themes and big dramatic action. I believe the tendency towards original screen structure will become stronger, for I am finding that to produce the thing the picture-goers want, one cannot find material in old or new fiction, or in old or new plays.”

Charles Eyton, General Manager of West Coast activities of Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, says:

“The demand for the sincere screen dramatist is greater than it has been at any previous time in the history of the motion picture industry.”

Robertson and Cole extend a cordial welcome to trained writers of photodrama. Miss Eve Unsell, head of this company’s scenario department, says:

“The day of the skilled photodramatist is at hand. The salvation of our art lies in the development of writers familiar with their medium.”

Gertrude Nelson Andrews, writer of fiction, drama and a number of successful photoplays, makes the following statement:

“Just to make money does not always mean success. One’s real success comes from the realization of one’s own growth. When the writer of photodrama has so grown in the understanding of life that he is able to interpret it with truth and a touch of the ideal, then he may hope for real success. When one fails, it is because he has not yet learned his art sufficiently well to succeed. So success is a matter of education and growth.”

“Arthur Stringer has said: “The motion picture is more than a new art; it is a new language, a new method of expressing thought and communicating emotion. It is an amplified sign-language, the picture talk of primitive man vitalized by movement and magnified to splendor. It is life, singled out and set in a frame. And as life it is deficient, as it stands, in just two things. One is color. And the other is sound. But this new, this novel, this revolutionary art which has been tossed into the

world speaks, not in words, but in action and scenic impression. It is quite vocal enough, only we haven't yet taken the trouble to acquaint ourselves with its amazingly impressive alphabet."

One might quote to the extent of many pages if all such expressions coming from authoritative sources—great producers of photodrama, writers, and forward-looking thinkers in general—were compiled. These have been chosen at random from a mass of letters, clippings and notes recording personal conversations.

Summing up our present relationship, we have three factors:

- (1) The Motion Picture, involving a new art and a new technique;
- (2) You, the student, desirous of developing your creative imagination, amplifying your dramatic insight and becoming a craftsman in screen technique;
- (3) The Palmer Course and Service, prepared and eager to serve as teacher, friend and guide.

We bring to you *knowledge*. The sum total of knowledge that it has taken the great writers, directors and producers years to acquire through experimentation, study and work, is condensed, compiled and presented for your benefit.

We shall give you *training*. You will be taught how to apply this knowledge in a practical way.

From your knowledge and training you will become possessed of *vision*—you will realize what a truly wonderful future is opened to you through the development and training of that most precious of all natural endowments—the *creative imagination*.

The future of the Motion Picture, as a great human institution, depends upon the efforts exerted by you, as one of the new generation of sincere students.

In placing the Palmer Course and Service in your hands, we are delivering to you the perfected tools—we shall spare nothing in our determination to make of you a proficient craftsman—a master in the use of these tools. It must be your imagination, your study and work, however, upon which your success will rest. We shall lead the way—it is your privilege to follow. The future lies in your hands. You are "master of your fate." Others have succeeded through studiously and persistently availing themselves of this same opportunity. Why not you?



